

QUEST FOR TRUTH

EVERY MAN'S FUNDAMENTAL DUTY

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PREFACE

This book is written for those brothers and sisters who are in quest of Truth. Discovering Truth is discovering Allah. Truth is bestowed from Allah and it is for the entire humanity. Of the uncountable gifts bestowed by Allah, Truth is the most important and the most valuable gift.

What is Truth? Truth is that way of life or system of life or the Religion which cannot be formulated by any person however intelligent or learned he might be or for that matter it cannot be done even collectively by the entire humanity. Although man has quite often tried to formulate a system of life, he has been unsuccessful. He has formulated many ideologies and religions in the name of Truth, but the truth is that they are not the Truth.

Allah has not at all allocated to man the work of formulating a system of life based on Truth. Allah, the Creator and the One worthy of worship, had given this system of life – indeed a great gift from Him – to man from his very inception. This was called Islam. The eminent personalities through whom this gift, i.e. the system of life (the Religion), was given were the Prophets of Allah. It is safely construed that Prophets might have come in India too in different eras. Because of his mischief and since he wanted to oppress others, man had been spoiling this system of life, and after additions and deletions to it had created different religions. Finally, about 1450 years ago, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) brought for the entire humanity a comprehensive and complete Religion based on Truth.

Prophet Muhammad presented this Religion for the entire human race. On the basis of this Religion of Truth, he cultivated a new man, a new family, a new society and a new system of life. Details of this accomplishment have been saved in the annals of history.

The most important and delicate responsibility of those who already believe in this Religion is that they should appreciate it wholeheartedly, act according to it, and propagate it among their countrymen with their speech, actions and their character and conduct; discharging these responsibilities is the purpose of their existence.

It is not to be understood that Allah has not sent down any religion for those who do not have this Religion and that those who are in its possession are its owners or masters. No, they are just custodians. Hence, it is essential for our countrymen to understand this Religion of Truth with open mind and ponder over it in the light of intellect and sound arguments. For their success both in this world and in the Hereafter, they should take the most important decision of their life before the onset of death. I pray Allah to fulfill the purpose for which this book is written. Amen!

I am thankful to Dr. Muhammad Rafat, Chairman, Tasneefi Academy, and Dr. Muhammad Raziul Islam Nadvi, Secretary, Tasneefi Academy, for the interest shown in the preparation of this book and for their useful suggestions. May Allah reward them suitably. Amen!

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A FEW IMPORTANT WORDS

O my brothers and sisters who are striving to discover the Truth!

May Allah guide you and may you be successful in discovering the Path of Truth. Peace be upon those who follow the Guidance.

Muslims are harmoniously living in this country for centuries along with Hindus, Dalits, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, and members of other communities. Hence, you might have some knowledge about Muslims. Because of living together, you might have naturally come to know about their weaknesses and strong points. Surely, some misunderstandings do exist for various reasons, and efforts are made to remove these misunderstandings from time to time. However, more efforts are required to be made in this direction. Moreover, you do not have complete and correct knowledge about Islam which adds considerably to the misunderstandings and confusion. Naturally, the non-Muslim brethren think Islam to be the combination of how Muslims manifest their beliefs, how they worship, how they celebrate their festivals, and how usually they lead their lives. But the fact is that generally the conduct of Muslims has no longer remained purely Islamic. Individual good and virtuous Muslims are found even today, but as a community the conduct of the Muslims does not completely represent pure Islam.

Efforts were always being made in every period of time to introduce Islam to others and remove the misunderstandings, which showed some positive results. But just giving an introduction of Islam and removing some misunderstandings were not enough. As a community, Muslims should have discharged the obligation of propagation, which quite often they neglected and it resulted in the non-Muslims cultivating and retaining many misunderstandings about Muslims and Islam. You will be amazed to read about some of the following misunderstandings:

- That about 1450 years ago, Hazrat Muhammad founded Islam, and that Islam is a new religion among the other religions of the world. The followers of Islam are known as Muhammadans and therefore Islam is Muhammadanism. [In truth, Islam was in existence since the inception of history and every Prophet brought no other religion but Islam.]
- That as every nation has its own religion so also Islam is the national religion of Muslims. [Though the fact is that Allah has ordained only one religion for the entire humanity and that religion is Islam.]
- Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Prophet of Muslims; he does not belong to other nations or communities. [The truth is that Hazrat Muhammad indeed was sent as a mercy for the entire world and as a Prophet for the entire humanity.]
- The author of the Quran is Hazrat Muhammad and it is the national and religious book of Muslims. In the Quran, except for Muslims, all others have

been declared as infidels and polytheists and have been ordained to be killed. With the existence of the Quran, it is impossible to maintain peace and tranquility. [The fact is that the Quran is a revealed book from Allah and it considers unlawful killing of any human being a great sin. Infidel means one who denies Allah, and polytheist means one who associates others with Allah. The term infidel and polytheist are attributive terms, not abusive. Muhammad was unlettered and hence he could not have authored the Quran.]

- Muslims pronounce the name of Emperor Akbar from their mosques. [This is alluded to the *Azan*, call to prayers. In the *Azan* the name of Emperor Akbar is not pronounced, but the words *Allahu Akbar* are pronounced which means *Allah is the greatest*. In Arabic, *Akbar* means "the greatest."]
- Islam oppresses women. They are oppressed through the concept of *Purdah*. They are forbidden to get education and they have not been bestowed with any human rights. [On the contrary, Islam is the first religion to bestow all human rights on woman and free her from centuries of oppression.]
- Marrying four wives has been made obligatory in Islam. Every Muslim gives birth to 20-25 children. [Islam has not made obligatory for Muslims to have four wives; rather it has give permission for it and that too when man could maintain equality among his wives. Otherwise, it is ordained that he should be contented with only one wife. In spite of this permission, leave alone four wives, the proportion of Muslim men having two wives in India is less than that of the non-Muslim men. The

proportion of births as against the non-Muslims is not more but according to a recent survey it has gone down.]

In addition to these, many more misunderstandings are found concerning Islam and Muslims. It is necessary to take steps to remove all these misunderstandings and present a comprehensive and correct introduction of Islam. In the prevalent circumstances, it is a very important religious duty, without which it is impossible to cultivate and nurture brotherly and pleasant relationships. A few sincere and pious Muslims and a few organizations are continuously trying to eradicate these misunderstandings through useful literature. However, still the message and true introduction of Islam has not reached millions of our countrymen and women. Apart from useful literature, if Muslims mould their lives into the mould of Islam and build up their relationships with their non-Muslim brethren on Islamic principles and treat them with love and kindness it will be the true, visible and practical presentation and propagation of Islam.

The above are a few important facts about Islam which have been placed before you, so that you can rise above all prejudices and understand the importance of investigating and reaching the Truth. You have every right to agree or disagree with the facts placed before you. But every man should, however, try to find out the True Religion, because refusal to believe in Truth entails in failure not only in this world, but in the Hereafter it would be difficult for him to plead ignorance before his Creator, and save himself from terrible punishment.

It is evident that no individual or religious group has a monopoly over Truth. It is not bounded by geographical boundaries. Truth is the guarantor of success and salvation for all men. If Truth is denied, it is not the Truth that fails, but the person or the nation that denies it fails. After the denial of Truth, the path that is adopted will be the path of disobedience of Allah, which results in failure in this life, and grievous punishment and deprivation of salvation in the Hereafter.

Do not look at who is presenting these facts. Rather see how far they are true and what weight they carry on the scale of intelligence and arguments. Whether they are compatible with human nature and whether the innumerable signs present in man himself and in the universe agree with them. Also examine why these facts are being presented; whether there is any personal interest or national interest involved in it. If you ponder about these questions with an open mind, your heart will cry out that this is the message of Truth, and its denial will be an unnatural and unintelligent attitude.

Man lives in this world for a definite term and is on probation. He has to take a decision, before his death, about where his advantages and disadvantages and his benefits and losses lie. He cannot do anything and take any decision once death visits him and he commences the journey towards the Hereafter. The biggest and the most important issue for every person is the achievement of success in the life after death, and it is the greatest mistake to ignore this issue and lead a careless life in this world. The failure in the Hereafter results in punishment of fire in the Hell.

What a terrific outcome! Is it not the responsibility of every person to escape from this horrible consequence?

MAN'S MOST IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY

Man's most important responsibility is that he should search for the system of life (the Religion) bestowed by Allah. It is not his responsibility to formulate any new religion or system of life. In the past man tried to do it and invented hundreds of religions; profusion of such religions itself is the greatest proof of failure of these efforts.

Man should have moral courage. If the light of Truth had not reached his ancestors, he should accept and adopt the Truth from wherever it is found after due investigation and on the basis of his own intelligence and after pondering over the arguments adduced in its favour; he should not allow any impediments to hinder him in this respect. Usually, people think that one should not abandon the system of life and religious beliefs of his ancestors. They also think that one should not accept the religious beliefs of others however true and intelligent they might be. We have to ponder over this attitude. If our ancestors were the followers of a true religion, then there is nothing wrong in following them and adopting their religious beliefs. However, for any reason, if they were ignorant of the Truth and still we follow them, it would be a foolish act on our part.

Man, basically, is the servant of Allah; he is not the servant of his ancestors or any other person. There is only one correct way open for him and it is that he

surrenders himself unconditionally to Allah and obeys Him completely. This concept is known as Faith in Allah or Unity of God. In this concept it is essential to desist from polytheism, which will be explained later.

One of the most important aspects of Faith in Allah is that it is not enough just to believe in the entity of Allah; rather we should have His true and correct perception, should have knowledge about his attributes and the demands they make on us. Also we should know about Allah's chosen system of life and believe it. Allah does not convey these facts directly to man. He has devised a very intelligent system for it, and that system is the chain of Prophets which commenced from Hazrat Adam (peace be upon him) and ended with the last Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Hence, it is essential to believe in every prophet, and now particularly in Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet. Denial of even a single prophet is considered as denial of all prophets as they had all been sent by Allah, which ultimately leads to the denial of Allah Himself.

Denying the Truth, when it has been clearly manifested, due to obstinacy, bias, hate, prejudices, selfishness and imitation of ancestors, is the greatest failure and downfall. This way man not only incurs losses in this world but becomes liable for grievous punishment in the Hereafter.

Allah has bestowed on man the gifts of intelligence and wisdom along with limited freedom of intentions and action. Unlike other creatures he is not constrained. Man has been bestowed with special capabilities and faculties, which are not to be used just to fulfill his material wants and desires; this way he

just becomes an efficient and high-end animal. On the contrary, it is the responsibility of man to seek the good pleasure of Allah, adopt His prescribed and approved system of life by giving up the limited freedom he has been bestowed with. Moreover, it is also necessary to desist from incurring the wrath of such a Merciful and Kind Allah. It is also the greatest responsibility of man to refrain from rebelling against Him.

Man has to put in efforts to find out why Allah has bestowed him with various special faculties and what the purpose of his life is in this world. Suppose a person achieves great successes in this world by using his capabilities and faculties but never uses them to know about his purpose of life, it would really be a great failure for him, because after death he would not find opportunity to make any amends. As such, is it not the fundamental and important responsibility of every human being to try to know the real purpose of life before death, so that he could lead a peaceful and contented life in this world and after death achieve the good pleasure of Allah and enjoy the eternal bliss of the paradise?

We cannot develop any presumption about Allah that although He has created man and bestowed him with life and other faculties of intelligence and wisdom, but has not set for him any purpose of life and left him in the world to lead his life according to his own whims and fancies, and that Allah will not call man to account for all the gifts and capabilities bestowed by Him.

Ponder over the issue of accountability from another angle. Will it be correct to assume that there

should not be a day of reckoning when man, after death is brought to life again and is asked to account for the gifts and faculties enjoyed by him in the world before Allah, and the righteous who led their lives according to the Guidance of Allah are awarded and the unrighteous are punished? Man's intelligence says that this should definitely occur, because when a person himself bestows on any one of his subordinates gifts and authority, he wants his subordinate to use such gifts and authority according to his will and wish, and also take stock of the things frequently, and award him for his honesty and diligence and punish for any insubordination. These are the natural demands of justice and fair play. Hence, if there were to be no such system of justice in the Kingdom of Allah, it would be against Allah's attributes of mercy, wisdom and justice; the conclusion of the intelligence in this regard is correct.

The goodness of man lies in his believing the gifts and resources of life as the benefactions from Allah and thank Him for them and lead his life as a true and obedient servant of Allah. The way to adopt Allah's complete servitude has been shown in the guidance and system of life which Allah has revealed on his last Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the form of the Holy Quran. The only way open for man now to achieve success and prosperity in this world and in the Hereafter is to believe in Prophet Muhammad and follow him fully with his heart and soul in every aspect of his temporal life.

As far as those who already are in possession of Allah's Guidance and the practical model of the last Prophet Muhammad, it is their responsibility to fully

act on it, end hypocrisy and contradictions from their life, and make their practical life a model of Islamic teachings, and invite people towards Islam and Islamic way of life with wisdom, love and compassion, make arrangements for educating those who accept Islam, try to solve their problems, share their sorrows and happiness, and never let them feel abandoned after accepting Islam, the Religion of Truth.

BELIEVING IN ONE GOD IS INDISPENSABLE

Those who deny existence of Allah have always been very few. In almost all religions, existence of god is acknowledged. However, its perception is not uniform in every religion; rather it is different in many aspects. Generally speaking, it is not enough just to believe in Allah. If man tries to perceive the entity of Allah through his intelligence, experience and contemplation, he would certainly go astray, because Allah is not an entity to be perceived through his sense of smell, sight and taste. Allah cannot be seen through our eyes; rather He can be perceived by pondering over innumerable signs found scattered in our own self and all over the universe. Getting a perception of Allah in this manner is in itself a great test and trial. The real necessity of man is that he obtains the knowledge and cognition of Allah, His Attributes, and the demands that they make on man, and know about His Will and the approved way of life so that he could act upon it with sincerity.

It is also an important necessity for man to know the objective of Life that Allah has chosen for him and how that objective is to be achieved. Only because of this, man can acquire paradise after obtaining the good pleasure of Allah. Allah Himself has fulfilled this necessity. He has not inconvenienced man to seek this knowledge about Allah and His Attributes with his

limited intelligence and with the help of conjectures. If man is to seek answers to these questions, he would certainly go astray and become a victim of Satan. To acquaint man with the knowledge about the cognition of Allah, His Attributes and demands that they make on man, He has sent His Prophets and Messengers and revealed on them His Books, the last such Prophet being Prophet Muhammad and the revealed Book being the Holy Quran. Now it is in the interest of man that he believes in the Prophets and Books of Allah and obeys and follow the last Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

One of the arguments put forth by those who deny the existence of Allah is that we cannot see Him. This is a very weak argument, because seeing Allah is not a precondition to believe in Him. We believe in many of the things that we cannot see. For example, existence of space is acknowledged by the scientific community though it cannot be seen. Similar is the case with the soul, gravity, etc. We cannot see them, but believe in them after pondering over the factors which point towards their existence.

The eyes of man do not have that power which enables him to see Allah. We cannot see the sun when it is shining with full intensity, and if any one tries to do so, he loses his eyesight. Similarly, when the lightening lights up the sky, it dazzles the eyes and momentarily blinds them. There can be many more such examples. However, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has informed us that when the righteous and pious people take residence in the paradise, their eyes would be bestowed with such power that they would be able to see Allah. A few religious groups claim that they

will show Allah in this world itself. But this claim is baseless. It should be clearly understood in this respect that seeing Allah in this world is not our need, nor will it be of any benefit to us. Our necessity in this world is to gain Divine Guidance. In the Holy Quran, it is stated that Allah is the Light (Guidance) of the heavens and the earth.

Allah is very kind on his servants that he has shown through His Messengers the path of His cognition, gave the knowledge about His Attributes and the demands they make on them, pointed out the effects and influence that they make on human life, and taught them the methods of His worship and how to remember Him in their life. It was the responsibility of the Messengers to act upon these instructions and present before others their life as a model. On the contrary, many other religious groups are found in the annals of history that trusted their limited intelligence and conjectures, and tried to acquire knowledge about Allah and his attributes, and tried to formulate the methods of his servitude and worship, but failed miserably and went astray. Some other ignorant people say that the objective is worship of One God alone but some mediums like idols, personalities and forms, have been adopted as means, by worshipping whom one can reach the real God. The question is whether Allah has ordained us to do so or at least has He accorded any permission to it. If He has accorded any such permission, where do we find such an ordinance in any of the teachings of a Prophet or a pious person? Another question also rises whether Allah has said in any of the Divine Books or informed through his any of the Prophets that man cannot directly worship and

obey Allah or supplicate Him. According to the Quran, these two things are not correct. After declaring faith in Allah, any man can worship and serve Allah, and also supplicate to Him; rather supplicating to Him alone is the right way.

The attitude of those people who do not want to believe in the clear and unambiguous teachings of the Prophets is not reasonable; rather it shows obstinacy. When the unseen manifests in the Hereafter, they would be wonder-struck and would not be able to deny it. But at that time, it would be of no use to believe in the teachings of the Prophets as that would be the Day of Judgement when the deeds would be judged and recompensed.

If man ponders over his birth and his self and the reality of the Universe, he will find many signs which will compel him to spontaneously call out that indeed Allah, the One, is the Creator and Master of all. To understand such signs, we have to study the Holy Quran either in its original language, Arabic, or through its translations which are readily available in various major languages of the world. Prof. Khurshid Ahmed writes in his book *Islami Nazriyeh Hayat* (Islamic Ideology of Life):

"It is a fact that when every person who has a visionary eyesight and a perceptive brain sees the realities of this universe will spontaneously cry out that this great work of multiformity could not have come into existence and remain in existence without a Wise Creator and Supreme Authority. From the earth to the heavens, the entire universe is a complete regulated organization, and this entire organization is being run under a great law, in which signs of all-embracing, flawless wisdom and faultless knowledge

can be seen everywhere. These signs prove that there is a monarch of this organization. Perception of an organization without an organizer, notion of law without a monarch, conception of wisdom without a wise person, and notion of knowledge without a learned person, and moreover, conception of creation without a creator cannot be envisaged. This universe is working according to a plan. Has the plan come into working without a planner? There is a great degree of beauty and symmetry in this universe. How is it possible to maintain this beauty and symmetry without an organizer? Moreover, if we do not believe in the existence of God and consider matter to be the originator of the universe, it would be difficult to explain the human and animal beings. Superficially, it is easy to say that different parts of matter joined together accidentally in a proportion and man or animal came into existence. But based on the modern scientific findings, it has become difficult (or impossible) to believe in such coincidences."

(p. 191-193)

A very beautiful, organized and stable universe exists here. Innumerable stars which are billion-times larger than our earth and galaxies comprising of billions of stars are found in it; scientists have not been able to assess the amplitude of the universe. Some time back, the Reader's Digest had issued a large picture of the Universe showing galaxies, stars and planets; on it an arrow had been placed pointing to a very miniscule point, underneath which it was written: "Our solar system lies somewhere between here." From this sentence, the immeasurable amplitude of the universe can be imagined. Such a huge universe cannot have come into existence by mere accident. When someone reads before us a good poem, we immediately ask him

about the person who has penned it. Similarly, when we see a good painting or a beautiful building, we want to know about the artist or the architect who created them. Hence, it is quite natural to come to mind the Creator and Sustainer of this huge universe when we ponder over it. It is stupid to say that this universe has not been created and came into existence by accident. Prof. Joad writes:

*"Twentieth-century physics, it was stated in the books of Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington, had revolutionized the nineteenth-century conception of the physical universe, and the revolution, it appeared, was friendly to religion. Science and religion now, the clergy were told, pointed to the same kind of universe and taught, albeit by different methods, the same truths. Science, it was hinted, had even re-established God."*¹

Those who deny existence of Allah say that the universe and all creatures found in it are not the creations of any Creator, because matter itself is eternal and it has existed since time immemorial and will continue to exist forever and that everything has come out of the matter. The matter is made up of atoms and when these atoms met accidentally, things came into existence, and even man was created by the accidental union of lifeless atoms. Those who believe in this hypothesis are known as atheists or materialists. This hypothesis is unscientific and illogical and the latest scientific findings have completely destroyed it. Majority of the scientists now believe that matter is not eternal and that the universe was created at a particular point of time. To prove this point, the Big Bang theory

¹ Joad, C.E.M., *God and Evil*, p. 133, (London, 1943)

has been proffered. The modern scientific findings also claim that the universe is gradually proceeding towards its ultimate demise.

The second hypothesis was that it was believed, during the last two centuries, that atoms do not perish. But this has been disproved by the scientific findings. Because of the interaction of atoms, changes occur, energy is discharged and atoms are often got destroyed.

The third hypothesis is that from the lifeless matter, life, senses and intelligence get created. However, it is quite often noticed that the order of lifeless matter remains but death occurs; the materialists have not been able to explain this phenomenon.

The fourth hypothesis is that the universe and everything in it came into existence by the atomic particles accidentally joining together. But according to the calculations, this hypothesis is so weak that accidental creation of the universe is highly unintelligible.

It is quite evident from the aforesaid brief analysis that existence of Allah is certain and believing in Him is quite indispensable for our life and existence. It is also obvious that getting correct knowledge in this regard through man's limited mental faculties, science and philosophy is highly impossible. The correct knowledge about Allah, the Creator of the universe and everything in it, including man, can be got only through the knowledge provided by the Creator Himself through His Prophets. Now that knowledge can be found only in the last and final Book, the Holy Quran, revealed by Allah on his last and final Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the Quran, detailed introduction of Allah, His attributes, necessity of believing in Him, and the demands that such a belief make on man have been described. The Quran also gives details about the beliefs and deeds which are against the Faith in Allah, and how wrong beliefs and wrong actions bring in miseries in this world and in the Hereafter. The Quran also explains in detail the way of life that has been chosen for man by Allah.

Each and every human being, irrespective of his race, colour, caste or creed, is free to accept the aforesaid facts and realities after careful considerations. The Quran does not ask man to accept its statements blindly and respects the freedom of choice given to him by Allah. However, it warns of the severe consequences he has to face if he misuses this freedom; if he accepts it and lives according to its way of life, he will succeed, and if he rejects, he will have to face a miserable failure.

PERCEPTION OF GOD IN ISLAM

When Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) started to convey the message of servitude of One Allah, naturally it created curiosity in the people to know about Allah; what is He, how has He been created, what are His attributes and why and how He is different from our gods. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) not only gave a detailed introduction of Allah and described His attributes, but also explained the demands these attributes make on man. He also described the effects of believing in Allah on the human life.

We have to ponder about the means that we possess to gain knowledge about Allah. When man tried to know about Allah through his intellect, experiences, sciences and observations, he went astray. It is also an important question what man should try to know and understand about Allah and what are the things that he should not rake up; what is the real necessity of knowing the Creator? Some people claim that they can show Allah in this life itself. This is a very misleading conception. Neither do we need such a sighting nor is such a sighting possible in this world.

The things that we really need to know about Allah are: what are His attributes and powers; what demands He make on man; which are the deeds that bring in His good pleasure and which that bring in His wrath; how can man fulfill the Will of Allah in this world; how can he save himself from the

accountability and punishment of the Hereafter; and what is the guidance that is provided to man to worship Allah and lead a life according to the Will of Allah?

Another question is whether Allah wants man only to worship, and apart from it has He not given any guidance for man's individual and collective life? As has already been said, there is no intellectual way of knowing about the entity of Allah, His attributes and their demands, and the method of worshipping Him. Allah has not put mankind into trial and inconvenience in this behalf, but has Himself provided all the information concerning Him; we should not try to rake up those issues which are not essential to know. It is the pious group of Prophets and Messengers throughout the annals of history who have provided us with detailed information about the entity of Allah, His attributes and His powers. These sacred persons have informed the mankind that they got that knowledge directly from Allah which was not bestowed to commonality. Whatever facts they have conveyed us about the entity of Allah are from Allah Himself.

At the time of the revelation of the Quran, about 1450 years ago, the following perceptions were in existence (they exist even today):

One perception was that there is a Creator of this universe, but after creating it and once putting it into a system has remained aloof from it, and that the universe is running on fixed laws, and that there is no relationship between man and his Creator.

On the other hand, though existence of Allah was accepted, but many other entities were also associated with Him. Many subordinate gods were invented and

they were also assigned different duties. For example, if one is a rain-god, the other is a god of wind; if one is assigned with the responsibility of looking after the affairs of the earth, the other is considered as the god of heavens & earth. Moreover, Allah was taken away from the purview of worship and in His place the subordinate gods were began to be worshipped.

The idol-worshipper polytheists were worshipping those gods which had been carved out of wood, stone, gold, silver and other substances. They were given formal bodies, shape and faces. There was a regular race of gods and goddesses. No god was without a wife and no goddess was without a husband. These gods were in need of sustenance too, which was provided usually by their worshippers. A majority of the polytheists believed that god reincarnates in human bodies and that some human beings are the reincarnates of god.

The Arab polytheists though believed in Allah, they also believed that Allah has progeny and that the angels are His daughters. The Christians though claimed to believe in One God, they had associated with Him at least one son, and with the godhead of Allah and His son, they had associated the Holy Ghost too with Him. The Jews too claimed to believe in One God, but their God too was not free from the materialistic and other human attributes; he strolled, he appeared in the human form, wrestles with His servant, and was father of one son.

Among these groups, there were fire-worshippers who used to worship fire, and there were followers of Sabaism who worshipped stars.¹

These and many other such perceptions existed (and still exist). These are all defective, absurd and unnatural. Not only these are evil perceptions, but also affect the practical life fatally. Because of these perceptions, defective and unstable characteristics and attitudes are cultivated in human beings.

Today, in the entire world, Islam is the only religion in which very clear and satisfying perception of Allah has been presented; His comprehensive attributes and the demand that they make on man have been described; polytheism has been refuted with sound arguments because polytheism is opposed to the belief in the Unity of God, and to understand fully well the concept of Unity of God, it is necessary to know about polytheism, which will be discussed in the latter part of the book. Discussing the perception of god, Moulana Syed Jalaluddin Umri writes:

"The Quran gives man the true and correct knowledge about Allah, His attributes, His Guidance, His laws and what He demands from his servants. You will find in the Quran, the principles of servitude of Allah, moral teachings, and laws pertaining to civilization, society and politics. Similarly, you will find description of paradise and hell. You will find in it circumstances leading to the rise and fall of nations. But the objective

¹ Excerpted from *Tafheem al-Quran*, (Syed Abul Aala Maudoodi), Vol. 6, p. 532.

of all these is to give man true knowledge about Allah and His likes and dislikes.¹

He further writes:

"When you open the Quran, the first Chapter that you read introduces Allah that He alone is worthy of worship; He is the Protector and Sustainer; He alone is worthy of praise; He is the Lord and sustains the entire universe; He is the Most Beneficent and Most Merciful and the entire universe exists because of his beneficence; He is the Master of the Day of Judgement; He alone takes the final account of all human beings. Thereafter, man is invited to rush back towards Allah and surrender to Him; seek help from him alone because that is the straight path. No one can save the one who goes astray from the wrath of Allah and his failure in this world and the Hereafter is certain. Hence, this Chapter not only contains the introduction of Allah, but also calls man towards Him."²

Islam gives a very clear and comprehensive perception of Allah, and it is as follows:

Allah alone is the Creator

According to the Islamic perception of God, Allah alone is the Creator of everything. Those entities whom people believe to be the creators are not the real creators but are all creatures, and obviously creatures cannot be creators. The Holy Quran avers:

"(Who) is better? Allah or the false gods they associate (with Him)? Or, who has created the heavens

¹ Syed Jalaluddin Umri, *Khuda aur Rasool ka Tasavvur Islami Ta'leemat mein (Perception of Allah and His Prophet in the Teachings of Islam)*, p. 157.

² *Ibid*, p. 160.

and the earth, and who sends you down rain from the sky? Yea,¹ with it We cause to grow well-planted orchards full of beauty and delight; it is not in your power to cause the growth of the trees in them. (Can there be another) god besides Allah? Nay, they are a people who swerve from justice. Or, who has made the earth firm to live in; made rivers in its midst; set thereon mountains immovable, and made a separating bar between the two bodies of flowing water? (Can there be another) god besides Allah? Nay, most of them know not."
(27:59-61)

Allah alone is the Master

Allah alone is the Master of the universe and everything contained in it. The Holy Quran says:

"Your Guardian-Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, then He established Himself on the Throne (of authority); He draws the night as a veil over the day, each seeking the other in rapid succession; He created the sun, the moon, and the stars, (all) governed by laws under His Command. Is it not His to create and to govern? Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds!" (7:54)

"To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth."
(2:284)

"Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds."
(1:1)

Lord means master, monarch, and absolute ruler.

The Quran avers:

"Say, 'Call upon other (gods) whom you fancy, besides Allah; they have no power – not the weight of an atom – in the heavens or on earth; no (sort of) share have they therein, nor is any of them a helper to Allah."

(34:22)

Allah alone is the Absolute Ruler

When Allah is the Creator and Master of the universe, then the right to be the Absolute Ruler also belongs to Allah alone. The Holy Quran declares:

"Is it not His to create and to govern? Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds."

(7:54)

"Say: 'Praise be to Allah, Who begets no son, and has no partner in (His) dominion; nor (needs) He any to protect Him from humiliation: Yea, magnify Him for his greatness and glory.'"

(17:111)

Allah alone is the Cherisher and the Sustainer

Ponder over the following Verses of the Holy Quran which explain that Allah alone is the Cherisher and the Sustainer of the entire universe and everything that He has created in it:

"Don't you see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and leads it through springs in the earth? Then He causes to grow therewith, produce of various colours; then it withers; you will see it grow yellow; then he makes it dry up and crumble away. Truly, in this, is a Message of remembrance to men of understanding."

(39:21)

"Say: Who is it that sustains you (in life) from the sky and from the earth? Or who is it that has power over hearing and sight? And who is it that brings out the living from the dead and the dead from the living? And who is it that rules and regulates all affairs? They will soon say: "Allah." Say: Will you not then show piety (to Him)?"

(10:31)

In short, health, progeny, knowledge, loss and gain, wealth and everything is bestowed by Allah alone.

Allah alone Listens to our Supplications and Fulfills Them

When Allah is the Master, the Cherisher, the Sustainer and the Absolute Ruler of the universe and owns everything in it, He alone can eliminate our difficulties and sufferings, and fulfill all our needs. The Holy Quran affirms:

"Who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him, and who relieves its sufferings, and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth? (Can there be another) god besides Allah? Little it is that you heed! Who guides you through the depths of darkness on land and sea, and who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy? (Can there be another) god besides Allah? High is Allah above what they associate with Him!"

(27:62-63)

"Verily those whom you call upon besides Allah are servants like unto you. Call upon them, and let them listen to your prayer, if you are (indeed) truthful!"

(7:194)

Allah alone is the Legislator of Law

As the Monarch and Sovereign of the universe, Allah alone has the right to formulate and legislate laws for His creatures, particularly for man. The Holy Quran avers:

"All authority to govern rests only with Allah. He has commanded that you serve none but Him."

(12:40)

Servitude of Allah encompasses both His worship and obedience to his Law. It is the duty of the servant or a slave to work according to the will of his master and never go against his will; man being the slave of Allah, he has to lead his life according to the Will of Allah and never deviate from it.

Life and Death are in the Hands of Allah alone

The Holy Quran declares that, as with other things, Allah has the authority over life and death too. None can stop a birth taking place or the occurrence of death.

"How can you reject the faith in Allah seeing that you were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will you return?" (2:28)

Allah alone has the Power and Authority over Loss and Gain

The Holy Quran teaches that Allah has the supreme authority over all things including the loss and gains that man encounters in his life, and that man should trust only Allah and should believe that Allah alone has the authority to effect loss and gains in his life.

"They have taken, besides Him (Allah), gods that can create nothing but are themselves created; that have no control of hurt or good to themselves; nor can they control death nor life nor resurrection." (25:3)

In another place, it is stated:

"Do not call on any other than Allah that will neither profit you nor hurt you; if you do so, behold, you shall certainly be of those who do wrong. If Allah do touch

you with hurt, there is none can remove it but He; if He do design some benefit for you, there is none can keep back His favour; He causes it to reach whomsoever of His servants He pleases. And He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (The Quran, 10:106-107)

Explaining the aforesaid Verses further, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"When you seek help, seek help only from Allah and trust (him); if all people would like to benefit you they would not be able to do so except that which Allah has destined for you, and if all the people would like to hurt or harm you, they would not be able to do so except that which Allah has ordained for you." (Tirmizi)

Allah alone has the Knowledge of Everything

No other creature or entity in the world knows everything both seen and unseen except Allah. The Holy Quran states:

"And whether you hide your word or publish it, He (Allah) certainly has (full) knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts. Should He not know what He created? And He is the One that understands the finest mysteries (and) is well-acquainted (with them.)" (67:13-14)

"With Him (Allah) are the keys of the Unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf does fall but with His knowledge; there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (inscribed) in a Record Clear (to those who can read)." (6:59)

There is none like Allah

Since the universe and everything found in it, are the creations of Allah, none can be like Him. The Quran declares:

"(Allah is) the Creator of the heavens and the earth; He has made for you pairs from among yourselves, and pairs among cattle; by this means does He multiply you; there is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees (all things)."

(42:11)

"Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him."

(112:1-4)

None can Intercede with Allah Except with His Permission

Usually intercession is made to save an offender from punishment or get the thing that he does not deserve. This is a clear act of dishonesty, and no honest and conscientious person is expected to accept such an intercession. However, some people believe that their false gods would intercede on their behalf with Allah and save them from the punishment they deserve and get them the luxuries of the Hereafter which they do not deserve. Allah does not accept such unjust intercession. Neither can Allah be pressurized, nor does He pronounce wrong decisions, nor can He be deceived. His decisions are all just and are taken in the light of His full and unfaltering knowledge. The Holy Quran avers:

"Warn them of the Day that is (ever) drawing near, when the Hearts will (come) right up to the throats to choke (them); no intimate friend nor intercessor will

the wrongdoers have, who could be listened to. (Allah) knows of (the tricks) that deceive with the eyes, and all that the hearts (of men) conceal. And Allah will judge with (justice and) Truth; but those whom (men) invoke besides Him, will not (be in a position) to judge at all. Verily, it is Allah (alone) Who hears and sees (all things)."
(40:18-20)

On the other hand, it is mentioned in the Quran that intercession of the Prophets, particularly Prophet Muhammad, and other virtuous men will be accepted by Allah on behalf of those Muslims who had committed sins and had become eligible for punishment. But this intercession will not be without conditions. Only those persons will be allowed to intercede who have been permitted by Allah to do so and those persons will also be identified on whose behalf intercession is to be made.

"The day We shall gather the righteous to (Allah) Most Gracious, like a band presented before a king for honours. And We shall drive the sinners to hell, like thirsty cattle driven down to water – none shall have the power of intercession, but such a one as has received permission (or promise) from (Allah) Most Gracious."
(The Quran, 19:85-87)

"And they say: (Allah) Most Gracious has begotten offspring. Glory to Him! They are (but) servants raised to honour. They speak not before He speaks, and they act (in all things) by His command. He knows what is before them, and what is behind them, and they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable, and they stand in awe and reverence of His (glory). If any of them should say, 'I am a god besides Him,' such a one We should reward with Hell; thus do We reward those who do wrong."

The Holy Quran also points out the kind of persons in favour of whom intercession will never be accepted.

"Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds, except the Companions of the Right Hand. (They will be) in Gardens (of Delight); they will question each other, and (ask) of the Sinners: 'What led you into Hell-Fire?' They will say: 'We were not of those who prayed; nor were we of those who fed the indigent; but we used to talk vanities with vain talkers; and we used to deny the Day of Judgement, until there came to us (the Hour) that is certain.' Then will no intercession of (any) intercessors profit them." (74:38-48)

POLYTHEISM: THE GREATEST SIN

It is not enough to believe that Allah is One; rather along with it, it is essential to believe that Allah alone is the Creator, Master, Lord, Sovereign Ruler, Cherisher and Sustainer and worthy of worship, and deny all those entities and things whom people have associated with Allah or made them gods in His stead.

Believing Allah to be One and also associating others with His entity, attributes and authorities is the greatest of the sins; this is known as polytheism. Hence, the Unity of God is to believe in One Allah and adopt his complete servitude; denial of others who have been associated with Allah and desisting from their servitude are part of belief in Unity of God.

What is Polytheism?

Allah is One not only in His entity, but is also alone in his attributes, rights and authorities; i.e. He is without any associates in all these aspects. Believing Him to be One also means that all those false gods be denied which people have invented as associates and partners of Allah. Those who are considered gods other than Allah or are considered to share the attributes of Allah, actually are neither gods nor do they share any of Allah's attributes. Polytheism is not only the greatest of the falsehood, but is unjust and inexcusable. Basing our life on such a falsehood leads us to go astray. Therefore, the Quran has declared

polytheism to be the greatest of the sins which is unpardonable.

"Allah forgives not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgives whom He pleases other sins than this; one who joins other gods with Allah has strayed far, far away (from the Right)." (4:116)

The Quran gives a very comprehensive introduction of Allah as follows:

"Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him." (112:1-4)

Many people who claim that they believe in One God, have made some His son, His daughters, His mother, though in reality He has no progeny nor has He been begotten. He has been in existence from eternity; He has no family; He is free from all human weaknesses; He does not require any assistance or help to run the universe; every creature, including man, is dependent on Him. The following Verses from the Quran amplify these facts further:

"Those who do not believe in the Hereafter deserve to be characterized with evil attributes, whereas Allah's are the most excellent attributes. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise." (16:60)

"Allah forgives not that partners should be set with Him; but He forgives anything else, to whom He pleases; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed." (4:48)

"It is He Who is God in heaven and God on earth; and He is Full of Wisdom and Knowledge." (43:85)

"If there were in the heavens and the earth other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in

both! But glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above what they attribute to Him." (21:22)

"Is then He Who creates like one that creates not? Will you not receive admonition?" (16:17)

"Those whom they invoke besides Allah create nothing and are themselves created. (They are things) dead, lifeless; nor do they know when they will be raised up." (16:20-21)

"Or have they taken for worship (other) gods besides Him? Say: Bring your convincing proof." (21:24)

It is a fact that Allah has not assigned the administration of His universe and His creatures to different helper-gods. He does not require helpers or assistants to manage His universe. This perception has been invented by people who presume that Allah also requires a team of assistants as the king or the president or prime minister of a state requires such a team to govern his state. Being in need of help and assistance is a sign of weakness and Allah is free from such weaknesses. The Holy Quran stresses:

"And say: 'All praise be to Allah Who has neither taken to Himself a son, nor has He any partner in His kingdom, nor does He need anyone, out of weakness, to protect Him.' So glorify Him in a manner worthy of His glory." (17:111)

There is no evidence that others partner with Allah in the creation, protection and sustenance of the universe and everything therein. Moulana Syed Jalaluddin Umri writes in his book:

"The proof that Allah is One can be had from the fact that His Will is being fulfilled in the entire universe; everywhere His orders are seen being obeyed. The earth, the heavens, the moon, the sun, the day and the

*night, everything, is ruled by Him and none has the audacity to disobey Him. If someone says that there are many gods of the universe, which part of the universe they rule and which are the creatures that are under their rule and command, and why don't we feel or see their rule?"*¹

The other name for polytheism is blindly following the ways of the ancestors. The Quran says:

"Be not then in doubt as to what these men worship. They worship nothing but what their fathers worshipped before (them)." (11:109)

"And they set up (idols) as equal to Allah, to mislead (men) from the Path! Say: Enjoy (your brief power)! But verily you are making straightway for Hell."

(14:30)

This is the terrible result of polytheism. Moulana Umri further writes about polytheism thus:

"If there happened to be many gods here, then there should have been clashes and conflicts; will of one god would have clashed with the will of another god; when one wanted to do something the other would have opposed it, because in the event of many authoritative and powerful gods ruling the universe, there is no way of avoiding differences and conflicts amongst them. God is that entity whose Will is promulgated and obeyed in the entire universe, and if His Will is not being fulfilled or being obeyed, it is the sign of his not being a God. If there were to be many gods of the universe, then all their different and conflicting wills should have been fulfilled at the same time, which would have certainly resulted in chaos and

¹ Syed Jalaluddin Umri, *Khuda aur Rasool ka Tasavvur Islami Ta'leemat mein (Perception of Allah and His Prophet in the Teachings of Islam)*, p. 258.

destruction. But, this is not so; rather we find administrative tranquility and compatibility everywhere in the universe. Having no conflicts and clashes in the universe, according to the Quran, is the clear evidence of there being only One God in the universe. The Holy Quran says:

"No son did Allah beget, nor is there any god along with Him; (if there were many gods), behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have lorded it over others! Glory to Allah! (He is free) from the (sort of) things they attribute to Him!"
(23:91)

"In the phrase 'Allah is free from the sort of things they attribute to Him,' it is pointed out towards the fact that man can shun polytheism only when he has an exalted and majestic perception of Allah. Hence, those who believe in the existence and sovereignty of many gods in the universe actually have a very low and demeaning perception of God."¹

A Few Questions about Polytheism

Polytheism began when people carved out idols of pious people to remember them and respect and honour their piety and righteousness. But later on, they were begun to be worshipped as associates and partners of Allah, though they had never claimed any partnership with Allah and had worshipped and served Allah alone in their entire life as His humble servants. The thing to ponder about is, being creatures of Allah, how can they become partners with their Creator. A

¹ Syed Jalaluddin Umri, *Khuda aur Rasool ka Tasavvur Islami Ta'leemat mein* (Perception of Allah and His Prophet in the Teachings of Islam), p. 258-260.

person who was in the confines of his mother's womb for nine months, was born as a baby, then had to pass through different stages of life as a boy, as a teenager, as an adult and as an old man and finally face death, and also during his life time had to face phases of joy, sorrow, comforts and difficulties helplessly without any control over them, cannot be associated along with Allah. If he were to be a god or a partner of god, he should have at least averted his own death.

If we were to believe in polytheism, the following questions arise which would be impossible to answer satisfactorily.

1. Has Allah described anywhere that He has appointed helper-gods to run His universe? Also, has He stated anywhere that He has assigned such and such responsibilities to each of His helper-gods? In which religious books these statements are found and what is the evidence that is adduced in support of them?

2. Some persons argue that common people cannot worship Allah directly, or that it is impossible for them to perceive Him. Therefore, He is worshipped in the form of an idol or a picture. We have to ponder over this argument. The form in which the idol or picture of Allah has been created is generally in the shape of a human being or an animal; the question is whether Allah is a human being or an animal. Another fundamental question that also arises in this regard is whether Allah has instructed to do so, and if He has done so where is it found? Moreover, Allah would not allow man to worship Him according to his own whims and fancies; He has certainly given clear instructions to worship Him properly. Then just

worship is not enough; but guidance was also required by man in his every aspect of individual and collective life, which Allah has also bestowed on man. Without following the way of life prescribed by Allah in his individual and collective life, man cannot fulfill his duty of servitude to Allah.

A very important guidance that the Quran has proffered is that any human being, after believing in Allah, can directly worship Him and supplicate Him, because Allah knows about man's worship and listens and fulfills his invocations.

3. Those false gods who have been associated with Allah or worshipped as gods have been presumed to possess human male or female figures. Do the gods possess human limbs? Along with this, these helper-gods have been credited with all the human weaknesses and many shameful stories have been related to them. Can these false gods with all their weaknesses become an ideal and model for us and how can they be followed in our life?

4. The polytheists in different parts of the world have different gods and different names for the gods whom they have associated with Allah or are worshipped in place of Allah. For example, the polytheistic perceptions of the creator of the universe are quite different with the polytheists of India, China, Greece, Rome, Africa, Australia, etc. Similarly, their attributes are also quite different to each other. The question is who is to be considered the real God of the universe. Hence, God of the entire universe can only be that entity whose perception is one in all parts of the world; of course, His personal name can be different according to the local languages, but the details

concerning his entity, his attributes and other details should be the same everywhere.

5. Generally, the polytheists worship their false gods according to their perceptions. But when faced with great difficulties and calamities, they forget these false gods and invoke only the True One. It means that deep inside every man perception of only One True God is ingrained. Invoking Him alone at the time of difficulties, seeking His help, trusting Him alone and hoping best from Him are inbred in human nature. On the contrary, associating along with Allah those whom Allah has not approved of and invoking them are against the human nature. It is like a mirage where man searches for water in vain.

Teaching of Monotheism in Different Religious Scriptures

When we go through the religious scriptures of different world religions, we find in them clear teachings of the Monotheism (Unity of God), though polytheistic teachings are also found in them. This shows that fundamentally, the teachings of these religions were based on Monotheism and that polytheism was added on to this belief later with ulterior motives. In Bible it is still found written:

"Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One."

(Bible: Deuteronomy 6.4)

"I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides Me there is no God."

(Bible: Isaiah 45.5)

In the Hindu Scriptures, in spite of overwhelming assertions concerning polytheism, still we find clear statements regarding monotheism.

"The Supreme Being (Purusha) is thousand-headed, thousand eyed, thousand footed; and, pervading the earth on all sides, He exists beyond the ten directions. The Supreme Being, indeed, is all this, what has been and what will be, and the Lord of immortality as well as of mortal creatures. Such is His magnificence, but the Supreme Being is even greater than this."

(Rig Veda, 10.90.1-3)

In the beginning rose Hiranyagarbha, born Only Lord of all created beings.

He fixes and holds up this earth and heaven. What God shall we adore with our oblation? Giver of vital breath, of power and vigour, he whose commandments all the Gods acknowledge; the Lord of death, whose shade is life immortal. ... Who by his grandeur hath become Sole Ruler of all the moving world that breathes and slumbers;

He who is Lord of men and Lord of cattle. ... His, through his might, are these snow-covered mountains, and men call sea and Rasā his possession: His arms are these, his are these heavenly regions. ... By him the heavens are strong and earth is steadfast, by him light's realm and sky-vault are supported: By him the regions in mid-air were measured. What God shall we adore with our oblation?

(Rig-Veda, 10:121:1-7)

"The one God hidden in all things, all-pervading, the inner soul of all beings, the master of action, living in all things, the witness, the thinker, without qualities, the one controller of the passive many, who makes the one seed manifold." (Shvetashvatara Upanashid, 6:11)

"This is the immortal, existing as the Lord, intelligent, omnipresent, protector of the universe, who constantly rules this world. Is there any other ruler than this?

(Shvetashvatara Upanashid, 6:11)

"I am the God, the Sustainer, the Master, the witness, the abode, the refuge, and the most dear friend. I am the creation and the annihilation, the basis for everything, the resting place and the eternal seed."

(Bhagavad Gita, 9:18)

"That which is invisible, intangible, without family, without class, without sight or hearing, without hands or feet, eternal, all-pervading, omnipresent, most subtle, that is the imperishable which the wise perceive as the source of creation. (Mundaka Upanishad, 1:4)

In the Yajur Veda we find the following statement condemning polytheism:

"Deep into shade of blinding gloom fall Asambhuti's (Uncreated's) worshippers. They sink to darkness deeper yet who on Sāmbhuti are intent (i.e. who worship created things)."

(Yajur Veda, 40:9)

In Sikhism it is written:

"He is the Sole Supreme Being; of eternal manifestation; Creator, Imminent Reality; without Fear, without Rancor; Timeless Form; Unincarnated; Self-existent; Realized by the grace of the Holy Perceptor."

(Sikhism, Adi Granth, Japuji, p. 1: The Mul Mantra)

Even in the African traditional religions, we find the concept of Unity of God:

"O God, You are great, You are the one who created me, I have no other. God, You are in the heavens, You are the only one: Now my child is sick. And You will grant me my desire." (African Traditional Religions, Anuak Prayer (Sudan))

"In the beginning was God, Today is God Tomorrow will be God. Who can make an image of God? He has no body. He is as a word which comes out of your

mouth. That word! It is no more, it is past, and still it lives! So is God." (African Traditional Religions, Pygmy Hymn (Zaire))

Forbiddance of Polytheism in Vedas

Hinduism is based on Vedas, although the terminology of Hinduism is not found in them. There are four Vedas which are well-known: Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Atharva Veda, and Sam Veda. Amongst them, Rig Veda is the oldest. The original teachings of Vedas taught Unity or Oneness of God. They also taught how to worship the One God and live according to his Will desisting from His disobedience. It was forbidden in the Vedas to worship besides Allah, other things like the sun, the moon, the trees, the stones, etc. or in the form of idols. Consider the following statement of Atharva Veda:

"That Parmeswar is neither second, nor third, nor yet fourth is to be called; He is called neither fifth, nor sixth, nor yet seventh, He is called neither eighth, nor ninth, nor yet tenth. He watches over creatures, all that breathe and that breathe not. He is all-powerful, in whose power the entire universe. He is alone, there is none like unto Him. Surely, He is One, the One alone."
(Atharva Ved, 13:4:16)

In the Yajur Veda, the following statement is found:

"Deep into shade of blinding gloom fall Asambhuti's (i.e. things like fire, earth, water, etc.) worshippers. They sink to darkness deeper yet who on Sambhuti (i.e. trees, idols, etc.) are intent." (Yajur Veda, 40:9)

In the Rig Veda, it is written:

"Do not worship anything other than Him." (10:121:3)

*"By him the heavens are strong and earth is steadfast,
by him light's realm and sky-vault are supported. By
him the regions in mid-air were measure. What God
shall we adore with our oblation?"* (10:121:5)

IT IS INDISPENSABLE TO HAVE FAITH IN THE QURAN

Is it not enough to have faith in religious books other than the Quran and follow them to achieve success in the world and salvation in the Hereafter? It is essential to ponder over this question calmly rising above emotions, biases and settled notions in order to succeed in the quest for Truth. Some intellectuals and religious leaders are of the opinion that the religious books of the pre-Quran era, in their present formations have the status of revealed Divine books, and that, like the Quran, they also invite people towards God and follow their teachings; hence having faith in them and acting according to their teachings is enough to achieve success and salvation. They are also of the opinion that having Faith in Quran, acting according to its teachings and having Faith in the last Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not necessary. However, they also agree that those who believe in the Quran and in Prophet Muhammad and lead their lives according to their instructions are also the followers of the Truth and they will also succeed. This is a very delicate issue and is to be discussed diligently.

Today, in the world, prominent among those books which are regarded as religious books are Vedas, Gita, Zend Avesta, Bible and the Quran. To understand fully well the claim of the Holy Quran that it alone can guide man in his life and is the guarantor of his success in this world and in the Hereafter and that the other

religious books found in the world are incapable of doing so, we have to examine whether the other religious books in the present form are capable of guiding mankind.

Bible

The compendium of the books contained in the Old Testament (the Torah) and the books in the New Testament (the Gospels) is known as Bible.

The Torah

The Torah is that Book which was revealed on Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) for the guidance of Children of Israel (the Jews). This book is now part of the Old Testament. There are 38 books in the Old Testament, out of which the first five books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, are known as Torah and the remaining 33 books are attributed to different Prophets (may peace be upon them).

To acknowledge a book to be a revealed and divine book, it is necessary to adduce strong and undeniable evidence that that book has been written under the guidance of a Prophet and that it has reached us with an unbreakable chain of reporters without any interpolation, additions or deletions. Just ascribing a book to a particular Prophet is not enough evidence to prove that it had been revealed on that Prophet.

Although, in principle, we Muslims believe that the Torah was actually the Book that had been revealed on Prophet Moses, but now the original book has become extinct, and the book that is now found in the name of the Torah is a corrupted version of the

original Book; this is even acknowledged by the Jewish and Christian scholars themselves.

The Gospels

The Gospels are part of the Bible and to differentiate it from the Torah and other books contained in the Old Testament, it is known as the New Testament: The Jews believe in the Old Testament only; but the Christians believe both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Gospel was also a Divine Book which had been revealed on Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) by Allah. As is the case with Torah and other revealed books, the original Gospel is now extinct and the four different Gospels that are found today are not ascribed to Prophet Jesus but are ascribed to four different authors. Hence the four Gospels found in the New Testament are known as (1) The Gospel According to St. Mathews; (2) The Gospel According to Mark; (3) The Gospel According to Luke; and (4) The Gospel According to John. As can be seen, none of the Gospels is according to Jesus. Including the aforesaid four Gospels, the New Testament contains 27 books, out of which seven books are considered apocryphal by a few sects of Christianity.

The books contained in the New Testament are not the originals and it cannot be said with certainty who wrote them and that the writings found in them are the original writings.

It is also acknowledged by the Christian scholars that from the very beginning additions and deletions were being made in the Bible (both the Old Testament and the New Testament), since Christians believed and

still believe that it is not only permissible to resort to falsehood and treachery in order to advance the "Truth," but is commendable. When such is the case, the Bible in its present form cannot be believed to be a Divine Book and relied upon to lead mankind.

Vedas and other Books of Hinduism

The religion based on the teachings of Hindu seers is known as Hinduism and the texts that contain these teachings are known as Shastras. Hindus do not have one authentic book or a particular way of life; they have many varied books which they consider sacred and which they follow.

The Vedas are four in number. They are: *Rig-Veda*, *Sama-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda*, and *Atharva-Veda*. It cannot be said with certainty when the Vedas were written and who wrote them.

There are varied and contradictory claims in this regard, but no claim is based on solid proof; they are all conjectures and estimations. Moreover, no evidence is adduced about the veracity of the claim that the Vedas were written by the sages who claimed to have written it under the guidance of Divine revelations.

Based on Vedas, many other Hindu religious books have evolved. They are as follows: ***Upanishads***: They contain the cream or essence of the Vedas. ***Smritis***: These are codes or manuals of Hindu way of life and were compiled by sages like Manu.

As has been stated above, the Hindu scholars themselves concede that it cannot be said with certainty who their authors were and at which period of time they were written. Moreover, there is no proof that the text of these books has remained pure and

unchanged. If it is conceded that these books were based on Divine revelations, the contradictory and inhuman teachings found in them which allow oppression of the fellow human beings based on birth and man-made caste system proves that they have been corrupted. Such books and the religion based on such books cannot discharge the responsibility of guiding mankind.

With due respect same is the case with Zend-Avesta (Religious Book of Parsees).

In the light of the aforesaid details, it can be surmised with conviction that the aforesaid books, i.e. the Torah, the Gospels, the Vedas and the Zend-Avesta, have not remained uncorrupted. Their actual teachings are now extinct. They are unable to solve the problems that arise with regard to human life at this point of time. Moreover, these books are stained with contradictions and inconsistencies. Hence, the book which contains inconsistencies cannot be a Divine book. Faced with inconsistencies, man gets confused as to which thing to follow and which to discard.

Think over the matter from another angle. Man is not in need of just some beliefs. Rather, he needs a religion which not only supplies rational and firm beliefs, but also provides answers to the questions regarding him and the universe, and offers solution to various problems that arise in his day-to-day life. Its point of view should appeal man's nature and intellect and should be in conformity with the signs found in him and in the universe. Along with this, the religion should be such that can regulate and fashion the life of the individual, the family and the society and which

can provide full and complete guidance. In short, the religion should provide a complete system of life and a code of conduct.

With due respect to all the religious books, it is to be mentioned here that none of them offers a complete system of life. We believe that these books had provided complete system of life in their original form, but now that they have been corrupted they are unable to guide mankind. We do not find in them any universal and comprehensive guidance and system of life. Of course, we find some moral teachings and a few imperfect teachings concerning society. Hence, after the revelation of the Holy Quran, all other religious books found in the world have been abrogated, because the guidance to solve the problems and issues arising in man's life and the way to his success in the world and salvation in the Hereafter are available only in the Quran. Moreover, except for the Holy Quran, most of the religious books have declared ascetic life as the ideal life to attain salvation. It is quite obvious that this is quite nonsensical, because if everyone were to adopt ascetic life, the family, society and civilization would not survive. In some other religions we find intense inclination towards materialistic way of life, which poses a hindrance to the development of godliness and piety. On the contrary, the Holy Quran offers us a middle and balance system of life which is neither ascetic nor materialistic. It says that while living a full life in the world, man has to lead a pious and god-fearing life in the world, and the best thing is that it gives us such a system of life.

A Brief Introduction of the Quran

The revelation of the Quran commenced about 1450 years ago in the Arabian City of Makkah, and was completed in a period of 23 years. The Quran was presented before the people by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), on whom it was revealed, as the Word of God and the Quran itself also claims that it is the Word of God. The proclamation that the Quran is not a work of man, but is a Message and Guidance from Allah to the mankind has been repeated several times in the Quran.

The Quran had been arranged in the order in which it is found today by Prophet Muhammad himself. He had also explained its meaning both by his words and his deeds, which have been authentically recorded and preserved and are known as Traditions or Ahadees. The entire Quran and the collection of the Prophet's Traditions are now available to us without any changes or alterations. As far as the Quran is concerned, we can assuredly say that it is now with us in its original form, word for word, as it had been revealed on Prophet Muhammad. This is not just the claim of Muslims alone; even the Christian scholars and orientalists acknowledge this fact.

Another particularity of the Quran is that it has not been revealed for a particular people, race or age; rather it has been revealed for the guidance of the entire humanity till the Day of Judgement. Its central theme is man, that is, it opens the gates of success and salvation for man and guides him to save himself from the failure and ruination in this world and severe punishment in the Hereafter. The Quran makes intellect and nature as its base. It does not demand that

its teachings be accepted blindly. It asks man to make use of his intellect and only after careful deliberation accept its teachings. There are no contradictory and conflicting statements in the Quran. We find in it strong and rational beliefs, a comprehensive system of worship, and a balanced and most suitable guidance in every aspect of human life. Also we get comprehensive guidance in the collective segments of human life such as education, politics, economics, social and civilized life, etc. In short, the Quran presents solution to every issue and problem of the human life.

On the basis of the teachings and instruction contained in the Quran, Prophet Muhammad moulded man's individual, family and social life on piety and righteousness and established a State on sound and equitable principles. He completely transformed the entire social system of the Arabian Peninsula which was based on oppressive and ignorant customs and beliefs and obliterated from the society evils like alcoholism, gambling, promiscuity, female infanticide, theft, robbery, murder and plunder, poverty, hunger, ignorance, etc. in a matter of 23 years which today's so-called modern and civilized States have not been able to accomplish even after spending billions of dollars. On the basis of the Quran, Prophet Muhammad was able to establish peace and tranquility, justice and fair play, and equality in the society; in particular, he restored the human rights of women, the weak and the slaves and gave them respectable place and position in the society. The revolution that Prophet Muhammad brought in the Arabian society was not just materialistic but it was

spiritual too; it was a comprehensive and all-pervasive revolution which the world now is in dire need.

INCARNATION OR PROPHETHOOD

A majority of the inhabitants of our country believe in incarnation, that is, they believe that whenever there is an increase in evil, mischief, oppression and tyranny on the face of the earth, God reincarnates himself in different shapes and forms, and after carrying out reformation and eradicating evil and mischief from the world goes back to His world. Hence, it is believed that Vishnu had reincarnated in the following ten incarnations: Ram, Parusram, Krishna, Balram, Mahaveer Jain, Gautam Buddha, Narasangh (half human half lion), fish, tortoise and pig. Some people believe that there were 24 or even more Avataras (s). It is also believed that Shiva had many s.

However, many religious scholars say that Avatara does not mean , but it means sending down something, such as, sending down a message, and hence the meaning of Avatara is one who brings in a message. Hence, Dr. M.A. Srivastava writes:

"The meaning of Avatara is not that God comes down to earth in human form, but it means that he sends his Messengers (Avatara). God has sent Avatara or Messengers for the guidance and salvation of mankind and this chain was ended with the Prophethood of Hazrat Muhammad. Great scholars and personalities like Swami Vivekananda and Guru Nanak believed in the institution of Prophethood. Researchers and scholars such as Pundit Sunderlal, Dr. Ved Prakash

*Upaddhayaya, Dr. P.H. Choube, Dr. Ramesh Prasad Garg and Pundit Durga Shankar Sathiyarhi have confirmed the meaning of Avatara as coming of Messengers from God for the salvation and guidance of mankind."*¹

The last Avatara or Messenger has been named in Vedas as Kalki Avatara or Narashansa. It is to be noted that the belief of is not found in the Vedas, and probably, this belief might have been incorporated from outside. However, there is a mention of Avataravad in Gita and Puranas. The following questions arise concerning Avataravad.

1. According to the Vedas and other religious scriptures, particularly the Holy Quran, God is free from all human weaknesses. He is beyond the conception of human life and death. There is no one like Him and no one can be like Him. However, in the popular conception of Avatara, all the human weaknesses are attributed to God. How insulting and demeaning it is to presume the God to take birth from a sperm of a human being, grow in the womb of a woman for 9 months, take birth as a child and pass through all the stages of childhood, adulthood and perform the task of reformation and then die as an ordinary human being. Moreover, it is even more insulting to assume that God reincarnated in the shape of fish, pig and half lion and half man.
2. The belief of Avataravad is against the attributes and the greatness and magnificence of God which have been described in all religious books. Another

aspect of this matter is also worth consideration. When God Himself comes down and performs the reformation work, he cannot become a model for mankind; only a man can be a model for another man. If we study the Vedas carefully, we find predictions about the coming of Narashansa, the last Messenger. Pundit Ved Praksh Upaddhayaya has proved from the Vedas that the predictions concerning the Narashansa and Antim Rishi fit on Hazrat Muhammad. Further, in Puranas and Upanishads too there is mention of the last Avatara named Kalki Avatara. The signs and predictions concerning Kalki Avatara fit only on Hazrat Muhammad. In Puranas too, particularly in Sangram Purana, Bhushiya Purana and Bhagavat Purana, predictions and signs are found about the coming of Kalki Avatara which fit on Hazrat Muhammad.

It can be safely presumed that in past ages many messengers and prophets must have been raised in India too who must have conveyed Allah's Message to the masses. Those entities who are known as Avataras and Rishis must have been the Prophets of Allah. If we do not accept the coming of Prophets in the past, then no reason can be attributed to the predictions that are found in the Hindu religious books about the coming of the last Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh). It is a tragedy that some mischievous people have hidden and corrupted the true teachings of the Prophets and have confined them to their own inner circle. However, some unbiased people, after studying the Hindu religious books in their original form and language, have tried to bring out the original teachings which

demolish the foundations of concepts of polytheism, , Avataravad, and other false beliefs found in Hinduism.

It is a painful historical fact that during the long period of Muslim rule in India, Muslims did not try to study the Hindu religious books in their original language, Sanskrit, and bring out into open the predictions found in them about the coming of Prophet Muhammad. Had they done so, large number of the Hindu inhabitants would have embraced Islam or at least would have shown affinity towards it.

Contrary to the popular Hindu conception of Avataravad, Islam presents the rational conception of Prophethood. It is quite obvious that man not only requires the necessities of material life such as food, clothing, shelter, etc. but more importantly he also requires suitable guidance and a way of life to lead a peaceful spiritual life. The question that arises is from where he should get this guidance. Man can, with his intelligence and experience, fulfill his needs of food, clothing and shelter, but he cannot arrange for a guidance and suitable way of life which could guide him in every walk of his life with the help of his limited intelligence and experience. Man has tried in the past, and still tries, to formulate a system of life for himself and invented many such systems and religions, but has failed miserably.

Islam says that Allah is not only the Creator and Sustainer, but also is the Provider of Guidance. His attribute of Mercy and Justice demands that he provides His Guidance for mankind. Hence, the first man created by Allah, i.e. Hazrat Adam, was also a Prophet and was provided with guidance to him and

his progeny to lead their lives according to the Will of Allah.

When the human population spread out on the earth and when people began to go astray, Allah began sending His selected servants to different people and nations at different points of time to convey His Message and guide the people who had gone astray. Such persons are known as Prophets or Messengers. As per popular belief nearly 124,000 Prophets have been sent by Allah till the advent of the last Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh). At the time when Hazrat Muhammad was commissioned as the Prophet of Allah, the entire world, because of the progressive development of transport and communication was gradually turning into a global village, and hence there was no need to send numerous Prophets to different regions and for different periods of time; just a single Prophet (i.e. Hazrat Muhammad) and a single comprehensive Book of Guidance (i.e. the Holy Quran) were enough. Hence, the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad and the Holy Quran revealed on him is not just for the Arab nation but for the entire humanity till the onset of Day of Judgement.

It is the Mercy of Allah that His final Book (the Quran), which was revealed on Prophet Muhammad during a long period of 23 years, and the biography of His Last Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad, which is entirely based on the teachings of the Quran, have been preserved in their entirety, thus making it easy for anyone seeking Truth to go through the Quran and the life of Prophet Muhammad and attain success and salvation in this world and the Hereafter.

NARASHANSA AND KALKI AVTAR

Predictions about the coming of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are found in many of the religious books. Not only clear indications about his physical appearance have been mentioned in these books, but such signs have also been stated that fit only on the personality of Prophet Muhammad.

In spite of deletions and additions in the religious books now in existence, many of the religious books particularly the Torah, the Gospels, the Vedas, books of Jainism and Buddhism, still contain predictions concerning the coming of Prophet Muhammad. In Puranas, Prophet Muhammad has been mentioned as Kalki Avtar and in Vedas he has been mentioned as Narashansa. Many Hindu theologians have proved that the signs and predictions given in Puranas and Vedas fit only on the personality of Prophet Muhammad.

"The word Narashansa is a combination of 'Nar' and 'Aashangsa.' 'Nar' means Man, and 'Aashangsa' means Praised. It should be remembered that 'Aashangsa' is not a word from the popular languages; it is a purely Vedic word. Some people say, the meaning of Narashansa is 'human praise.' In the opinion of others, Narashansa means 'praised by men.' The two meanings have been derived by compounding the words 'Nar' and 'Aashangsa' in two different ways. In reality, both ways of compounding are wrong. The word Narashansa is actually pointed to a particular individual. In Vedas, the person whose praise has been sung in chapters relating to Narashansa, the word Narashansa applies to that

person. ...The word Narashansa comes under the objective case and its meaning is 'the praised man.' Therefore, the word Narashansa cannot be applied to any demigod (or spirit or angel). The word Narashansa clearly proves that the person for whom the adjective 'the praised' is used, must belong to the human race. ...References relating to Narashansa cannot be found in the popular Sanskrit scriptures. However, such references are found in many 'mantras' (hymns) of the Vedic scriptures. Specifically, in the Vedic incantations many hymns have been dedicated to the subject of Narashansa. In the 127th section of the 20th canto of the Atharvaveda, fourteen mantras have been recorded in the praise of Narashansa. Of all the Vedas, the Rigveda is the oldest. Narashansa is mentioned in many places of the Rigveda, so much so that all eight mantras in the Rigveda start with the word Narashansa. ... the mention of Narashansa with praise and hymns is widespread throughout the four Vedas."¹

Arguing and presenting undeniable proof that the word Narashansa fits exactly on the personality of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Dr. Upaddhayaya States: "It is clear that it points to a person whose name has the same meaning as is derived from the word Narashansa. This person is a 'Nar' i.e. man and 'Aashangsa' i.e. praised. Keeping in view the reasons and indications given earlier, we have to look for a person who is a man and who has been praised in numerous ways. The word Muhammad is derived from its Arabic root 'Hamd' i.e. 'praise,' and it means 'The Praised.' And Muhammad was certainly a

¹ Upaddhayaya, Ved Prakash, Dr., *Narashangsa and the Antim Rishi*, Chapter 1.

man as is declared in the Quran: 'Say (O Muhammad), I am but a man like you, (except that) the Inspiration has come to me that your God is One God – Sura Kahaf (The Cave), Verse 110. Therefore, Muhammad had both the qualifications. He was a 'man' and he was 'praised.' This proves that the word Narashansa is applicable to the person whose name in Arabic was Muhammad. To illustrate further, the word 'jal' points to the same thing as denoted by 'water' and 'aab' and 'wesser.' The only difference is that 'jal' is a Sanskrit word, whereas 'water' is English, 'aab' is Persian and 'wesser' is German. Similarly, Narashansa is a Sanskrit word while Muhammad is an Arabic word, but both the words point to the same person."¹

In Vedas several indications, signs and attributes have been given by which we can identify exactly the personality on whom they fit. In Atharva Veda, it is very clearly mentioned that Prophet Muhammad's mount would be camel (20:127:2). This clearly shows that camels would be generally used as means of transportation in the region in which the last Prophet takes birth. Hence, it is a fact that Prophet Muhammad came from a sandy region and he used camels as his mounts.

In one of the Verses of Yajur Veda, Prophet Muhammad has been mentioned by his another name "Ahmed" as follows:

"Ahmed is a great person, who like the Sun eradicates darkness. He only who knows him succeeds in the Hereafter. There is no path save this alone to travel.

(31:18)

¹ Upaddhayaya, Ved Prakash, Dr., *Narashangsa and the Antim Rishi*, p. 14.

In the Allo Upanishad, we find the following Mantra which even more clearly indicates the coming of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

"The name of this God is Allah. He is One. Mitra, Varuna, etc. are all His attributes. In fact, Allah is Varuna, who is the Lord of the entire universe. Friends, believe Allah to be worthy of your worship... Allah is the Greatest, the Best, the Most Perfect, and the Flawless. Muhammad is the most intimate Prophet of Allah. Allah is the Creator of everything in the world from the beginning to the end. All best names belong to Allah. Indeed, it is Allah who has created the sun, the moon and the stars." (1-3)¹

Some more signs pertaining to Prophet Muhammad found in Vedas are as follows:

- Narashansa will be given Divine knowledge. (Rig Veda Samhita, 1:13:3)
- Narashansa will rescue people from sins. (Rig Veda, 1:106:4)
- One of the temporal names of Narashansa will be Muhammad. (Atharva Veda, 20:127:3)
- Narashansa will be given ten wreaths. (Atharva Veda, 20:127:3)
- Narashansa will possess 10,000 cows. (Atharva Veda, 20:127:3)

Ponder over the following statement of Atharva Veda:

"Listen to this, you men, Narashansa will be sent amongst the people. We shall protect him from thousands sixty and ninety. His mount shall be camel, whose loftiness shall make the heavens bow down. A hundred chains of gold, ten wreaths, thrice-a-hundred

¹ Shrivastav, M.A., Dr., *Vedic Sahitiya Ek Vivechan*, p. 101.

mettled steeds, ten-times-thousand cows shall be given to him."
(20:127:2-3)

Dr. Ved Prakash Upaddhayaya has proved in his book *Narashansa and the Antim Rishi* that 100 chains of gold means the Companions of Suffa, 300 steeds mean the Companions of Prophet Muhammad who formed the army of 313 that fought in the Battle of Badr, and 10,000 cows mean the army of 10,000 Companions that conquered Makkah.

Kalki Avatara

[The following is the gist of pages 23-36 of the book, *Hazrat Muhammad and Bharatiya Dharma Grantha*, by Dr. M.A. Srivastav. For details, refer the book.]

Avatara means taking birth of a great person on the earth to convey the Message of Allah to the people, or in other words, Allah sending a person closely linked to Him on the earth. Such a person could only be His devotee and sincere worshipper. In the ancient times, one Avatara could not fulfill the requirements of the entire world and hence different Avatars were sent for different parts of the world and at different times. The Holy Quran informs us: "*Every people has its guide.*" (13:7) However, the last and final Avatara (Kalki) has a distinctive quality and that is he has not been sent for a particular region but for the entire world. When people turn away from the Religion of Truth and go astray, or corrupt the Religion to suit and fulfill their undesirable desires, then Allah sends His Messengers or Prophets or Avatars to guide them.

Signs Concerning the Coming of the Last Avatara

The scenario that has been drawn concerning the social environment of the world at the time of the last Avatara is that barbarism, oppression, tyranny and chaos would rule, people would have no qualms in robbing others of their wealth and property, female infanticide would be rampant, and ignoring One Allah, hundreds of gods would be invented and worshipped.

In the era of Prophet Muhammad, people had forgotten the original Religion of Truth and in place of One God had invented hundreds of gods. Religion for them was nothing but a bunch of superstitions and idol worship. In the Kalki Purana, it is stated that during the time of the Last Avatara, horses and swords would be used in wars. Prophet Muhammad had made use of horses and swords during his campaigns and not tanks and modern weapons.

In the Kalki Purana and Bhagavat Purana, the place where Kalki Avatara will take birth has been named as Shambhal village. It is yet to be established whether the name Shambhal is a proper noun or an adjective which describes its attributes. However, some scholars are of the opinion that Shambhal describes its attributes, i.e. a place where water is abundantly available and which is attractive and peaceful. The literal meaning of Shambhal is a "place of peace and tranquility." Makkah, where Prophet Muhammad was born, is called *Darul Amaan* i.e. a House of Peace.

The date of birth of the Kalki Avatara and the names of his parents have been mentioned in the second chapter of the Kalki Purana. It has also been mentioned that with his birth, mankind would be

greatly benefitted. He will be born on the 12th lunar day of the spring-harvest. Prophet Muhammad was born on 12th Rabiul Awwal in Makkah; Rabi is one of the months of spring. The name of Kalki's father has been mentioned as Vishnu-Yash – Vishnu means Allah and Yash means servant. The name of Prophet Muhammad's father was Abdullah, which also means servant of Allah in Arabic. The name of Kalki's mother has been stated as Sumati (Som Vati), which gives the meaning of one who is gentle and thoughtful; the name of Prophet Muhammad's mother was Aamina, which has a similar meaning in Arabic too.

Some of the Attributes of Kalki Avatara

- He will ride a horse.
- He will annihilate the oppressors.
- He will have the cooperation of four brothers. In Kalki Purana (2:5), Kalki says: "O God! With the companionship of four brothers I will destroy the Devil." Brothers in this context mean companions. Prophet Muhammad had four prominent Companions, viz. Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and `Ali.
- Kalki has been named as the Last Avatara. According to Bhagavat Purana, out of the 24 Avataras, Kalki would be the last Avatara. Prophet Muhammad has been declared as the last and final Prophet in the Holy Quran.

The Eight Attributes of Kalki

In Chapter 2 of Canto 12 of Bhagavat Purana, the following eight attributes of Kalki Avatara have been described. These attributes have also been described in the Mahabharata.

1. He would be a great scholar.
2. He would be from a noble lineage.
3. He would be a pious and a self-controlled person.
4. He would have knowledge based on Divine revelation.
5. He would be a very brave and a very courageous person.
6. He would be man of few words.
7. He would be very generous.
8. He would be a grateful person.

All the aforesaid attributes can be found in the holy life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)

In the foregoing pages you have been explained about Oneness of God (Monotheism), Prophethood and the Hereafter. You have come to know that the first pair of human beings was Hazrat Adam (peace be upon him) and his wife Hazrat Hawwa (Eve). They were settled on the earth on the command of Allah and were given the Guidance (religion) from Him which was Islam (whatever might have been its name in the parlance of that time). Hazrat Adam was not only the first man on earth but was also the first Messenger or Prophet of Allah. When the progeny of Adam increased and settled in different parts of the earth, Allah raised amongst them various prophets in different parts of the world and at different times. It is certain that Prophets must have been sent into our part of the world, i.e. Bharat, too. The last link of this long chain of Prophets is Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). A brief account of his life is being presented here; for details one should read other exhaustive books written on his life.

Prophet Muhammad was born in 571 AD in the city of Makkah in Arabia. His father, Abdullah, had died a few months before his birth. Six years after his birth, his mother Aamina too died and thus he was orphaned. Thereafter, he was brought up by his

grandfather Abdul Mutallib and after him by his uncle Abu Talib.

Before proceeding further, it is important to know some important facts concerning Prophet Muhammad.

1. Predictions about the coming of Prophet Muhammad are found in the previous religious books such as the Vedas, the Puranas, the Torah, the Gospel, Buddhist Scriptures, etc. Although these books have been interpolated still we find in them clear signs and predictions about the coming of Prophet Muhammad, which entirely fit on him; these have been discussed in the foregoing pages.
 - In the Vedas, Prophet Muhammad has been named as Narashansa.
 - In the Puranas, he has been called as Kalki Avatara.
 - In the Bible his name is Parakalitus (Farqaleet in Arabic).
 - In the Buddhist Scriptures he has been mentioned as the Last Buddha.
2. The second singularity of Prophet Muhammad is that his entire life and work has been recorded in history. Right from his birth, his childhood, his youth and his 23 years of Prophethood till his death, every event has been recorded and preserved from the most authentic sources. Even after nearly fifteen centuries, we can still gather information on any event or part of his life.
3. Prophet Muhammad had very clearly stated that he has not come with any new religion or new message; rather his teachings are similar to the teachings of the previous Prophets. Hence, he is not the founder of Islam, as some misinformed and

mischievous people say; teachings of Islam were revealed on him by Allah. He also made it clear that he is not god or the incarnation of God; rather he was a servant of Allah, the difference being that he received Allah's revelation. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"Say: I am but a man like yourselves, (but) the inspiration has come to me, that your God is One God: whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and, in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner."
(18:110)

Childhood and Youth

The childhood of Prophet Muhammad was free from any inappropriate and improper behaviour. From childhood itself he was modest, shy and decent. When he reached adolescence, he never indulged in any immoral and immodest activities that young men of the Arabian society of that age used to get involved in. He always told the truth and never lied. He liked cleanliness and personal hygiene. As a young man he was engaged in trading activities. He was so honest and straightforward in his dealings that people always praised him and trusted him with their valuables. He lived a very simple but dignified life. He never took revenge for his self. He had the quality of always forgiving those who wronged him. He never scolded or bodily harmed any man, woman, child, servant, slave, slave-girl. He loved and tried to help the weak, the poor, the slaves, the orphans and the children; he used to treat even animals with kindness and instruct others also to do the same. He fulfilled all promises and covenants made by him. He was a hospitable person.

He was very considerate to his neighbours. He always tried to discharge his duties towards other fellow human beings. He stayed away from the evil activities that were current in the Arabian society of that time like idol-worship, drinking, gambling, promiscuity, bloodshed, robbery, female infanticide, etc.

On a few occasions, he traded in partnership with one of the richest and most respectable ladies of Makkah, Hazrat Khadija. Hazrat Khadija was very much impressed by the honesty, integrity and straightforwardness of Hazrat Muhammad, and expressed her desire to marry him. Although Hazrat Muhammad at that time was just 25 years old and Hazrat Khadija was 40, he agreed to marry her with the consent of his uncle Abu Talib. He begot with her four daughters and three sons; the sons died in their infancy.

When Hazrat Muhammad reached the age of 40, he was renowned all over Makkah as the most honest, truthful and trustworthy person. He had a natural abhorrence towards tumult, oppression, tyranny. When he watched his people indulging in all sorts of evil practices, idol worship and bloodshed, he used to get very disturbed. He knew at heart that these activities are bad for his people but did not know what to do in those circumstances. Therefore, he used to seek solitude and retired to a cave called Hira which was located at a hill a short distance away from Makkah in search of Truth and think about the ways and means of reforming his people.

Prophethood

On one such occasion, an angel (Hazrat Gabriel) comes to him and conveys him the Message from Allah commissioning him as the Allah's Messenger not only for the Arab people but for the entire world, and teaches him the first five Verses of the revelation:

"Proclaim! (or Read!) in the name of your Lord and Cherisher who created – created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. Proclaim! And your Lord is Most Bountiful – He Who taught (the use of) the Pen – taught man that which he knew not."

(The Quran, 96:1-5)

Dazed and terrified with this new experience, Hazrat Muhammad returned home and told his beloved wife, Hazrat Khadija, about the incident. Hazrat Khadija understood the importance and enormity of the situation and comforted him by saying: "Allah will not desert you; you always speak the truth; you are loyal and kind to your kin; you feed and help the poor and the indigent; and you are hospitable to strangers and guests." Then she took him to his cousin, Waraqah bin Naufil, a very learned, devout and true Christian, and narrated the incident. After listening to the details, Waraqah rejoiced and declared that Hazrat Muhammad was Allah's Chosen One sent to renew the Faith and the Truth. On hearing this, Hazrat Khadija, spontaneously declared her belief in Hazrat Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah and Allah to be the One and Only God worthy of worship and servitude. Thus Hazrat Khadija became the first Muslim. The importance of Hazrat Khadija's belief in Hazrat Muhammad as Allah's Prophet should not be lost sight of as she was the wife and close companion

of Hazrat Muhammad for 11 long years; who can vouch better for a person's integrity, honesty, and character and conduct than his wife?

After the aforesaid incident, Prophet Muhammad did not return to the solitude of the cave of Hira. No one should be mistaken that in the cave of Hira, Prophet Muhammad was attempting and endeavouring to become a Prophet. Prophethood cannot be attained by toiling and observing abstinences. It is Allah's prerogative that He chooses a particular person from amongst his servants and commissions him as His Messenger and Prophet. The responsibility of a Prophet is just to receive the revelation from Allah and guide the mankind. It should also not be mistaken that Prophet Muhammad was just a reformer or a Sant, or a Sufi or just a pious man. He was the Chosen Prophet of Allah whose responsibility was to convey the Message of Allah to the humanity and guide it according to that Message. He fulfilled this responsibility in the most excellent manner and in a short period of 23 years of his Prophethood he revolutionized the entire Arabian people into a pious and responsible community.

Confidential Propagation

For the first three years, the propagation of Islam was kept confidential and only those who were close to Prophet Muhammad were invited to the fold of Islam. Apart from Hazrat Khadija, the wife of the Prophet, who was the first person to accept the Faith, the first to declare their belief in Allah being the One and Only God and Muhammad being His Prophet, were his closest friend Hazrat Abu Bakr, his cousin, Hazrat Ali,

who was just 11 years old and was a member of Prophet's household, his freed slave and servant Hazrat Zaid bin Harith. All these persons knew Prophet Muhammad very well and no part of his life was hidden from them, and their accepting him as Allah's Prophet is proof of his truthfulness and integrity. Prophet Muhammad slowly and silently expanded his propagative activities and more number of his close relatives and friends became adherents of Islam. Those who accepted Islam also chipped in the propagation work and brought in their relatives and friends into the sphere of Islam. Thus, soon a small group of Muslims comprising of men, women, old, young, boys and children was formed who kept their Faith hidden fearing persecution from the pagans of Makkah.

Open Propagation

After the end of three years, Allah ordained Prophet Muhammad to openly propagate Islam. Hence, according to the custom of the time, Prophet Muhammad climbed up the Hill of Safa and shouted in a loud voice "*Ya Sabaha*" (Ah, the danger of the dawn!). It was customary in Arabia that if there was danger of an attack at dawn, whoever came to know about it used to shout in this manner and people used to come out of their homes and gather around the shouter. He called the people of the Quraish and other tribes name by name. When people heard the voice of Prophet Muhammad they came out of their homes and gathered around him; those who could not come sent their representatives. When all the people had gathered, he said to them: "O people, if I were to

inform you that a strong army of the enemy has gathered behind this hill and is about to attack you, would you believe me?" Everyone said: "Yes, in our experience we have always found you truthful." Then the Prophet said: "I have been sent to forewarn you before the onset of Allah's punishment." Instead of heeding to the warning, people got angry with the Prophet and murmuring their unhappiness returned to their homes.

It should be noted from the above incident, that the Prophet of Allah did not commenced any separate movement for the eradication of evils present in the Arabian society, but invited all to accept the servitude of One God, i.e. Allah.

Opposition

The pagans of Makkah could not tolerate the call of Islam, because it called upon them to adopt servitude of Allah alone and give up all those entities that they had associated with Allah. Moreover, they thought the ideology of Islam alien to the beliefs of their forefathers. Only a few persons accepted Islam and majority of the pagans started to oppose Prophet Muhammad and his followers, first verbally and later with oppression and torture. His followers used to be beaten, left lying naked on burning coals or on the burning sand in hot sun. In such a situation not only the Prophet showed extreme patience but also advised his followers to be patient. In spite of all the inconvenience and torture, not a single person abandoned Islam. They were even socially boycotted and were confined in a valley for a period of three years without any access to food and shelter. When

innocent children used to weep and cry due to hunger and thirst, the pagans and their leaders used to laugh at them. However, some of the tribal leaders felt pity on them and with their efforts, this siege was lifted. But there was no drop in the opposition; rather it increased day by day.

Journey to Taif

Having got disappointed with the response from the people of Makkah, Prophet Muhammad journeyed to Taif (which is about 80 miles from Makkah) in order to invite its people to the fold of Islam and thus garner support from them for his cause. But the chiefs of Taif not only rejected and ridiculed Prophet Muhammad's call, but the city's urchins, rogues and rascals were set upon him who physically manhandled him by throwing stones at him and beating him which rendered him bleeding to such an extent that his sandals were filled with his blood. Prophet Muhammad returned to Makkah after this tragic incident. He bore all these insults, torture and humiliation because he wanted to guide humanity towards the right and straight path and save it from ignominy in the world and punishment of Hell in the Hereafter.

Migration

After bearing the severe opposition and unbearable torture for thirteen years, on the instructions of Allah, Prophet Muhammad permitted his Companions to migrate to Madinah. Later, he also migrated to Madinah in the year 624 AD. On the night of migration, he made arrangements for the return of all

the valuable things that had been entrusted to him by the people for safekeeping. The details of this migration are very enlightening; however here they are dealt with only briefly.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in Madinah

Prophet Muhammad safely arrived in Madinah where he had considerable number of followers. Some Jewish tribes also inhabited Madinah. He and his Companions continued with their propagation of Islam and commenced building up an Islamic society under the instructions and guidance of the Holy Quran. However, the pagans of Makkah did not allow Prophet Muhammad and his followers to live peacefully in Madinah. They attacked Madinah several times and tried to annihilate the Muslim population, but failed miserably. In spite of the enmity and opposition shown by the people of Makkah, the Prophet of Allah always treated them with kindness wherever and whenever possible. On one such occasion, during a severe drought in Makkah, Prophet Muhammad sent 500 Dinars to the chief of the Quraish, Abu Sufiyan.

Soon after his arrival in Madinah, Prophet Muhammad entered into a peace treaty with the Jews and other non-Muslim tribes of Madinah which guaranteed peace and religious freedom to all. Although Prophet Muhammad, as the head of the Islamic State in Madinah, always fulfilled the terms and conditions of the peace treaty, the other parties to the treaty, particularly the Jews, always contravened them. Moreover, the Jews plotted against the Prophet of Allah and the Muslims in order to stem the spread of Islam.

During the stay in Madinah, Prophet Muhammad had to fight 82 small and big wars, out of which in 27 battles he personally took part. The number of persons killed on both sides in these wars was only 1018 and the number of those who were made prisoners was 6565. Prophet Muhammad reformed the objective of war and the ways and means of prosecuting it according to the teachings of the Holy Quran. The following instructions about the conduct of war are worth noting:

- Do not breach treaties and covenants.
- Do not cut out noses, ears and other parts of the dead bodies of the enemy.
- Do not kill women, the aged, children and the slaves.
- Do not burn any person.
- Do not bind and kill a person.
- Do not destroy crops.
- Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees and animals.
- Do not kill an emissary.
- Do not destroy places of worship.
- Do not kill the one who has surrendered.
- Do not attack the enemy in the night; wait for the dawn.

Except for the attack on Makkah, all other wars were defensive wars. Prophet Muhammad always tried to avoid bloodshed and whenever possible sued for peace. One such incident is the peace treaty he entered into with the pagans of Makkah at Hudaibiya. In order to avoid bloodshed, he agreed for some of the conditions which seemed at that time unreasonable, but still he went through the treaty in spite of opposition from his Companions. However, the most important

condition of the treaty was that the parties to the treaty would not go to war for a period of ten years. The peaceful environment created by this condition enabled Muslims to take up propagation of Islam more vigorously and many tribes embraced Islam.

Conquest of Makkah

Within two years of the Treaty of Hudaibiya, the Quraish of Makkah breached it. Hence, Prophet Muhammad marched on Makkah with a force of 10,000 warriors. The people of Makkah did not have the power and means to face and confront the Muslim army and Prophet Muhammad easily conquered Makkah with least bloodshed; only a few persons were killed. Since Prophet Muhammad wanted no bloodshed, before entering Makkah he made a proclamation that:

- Any who enters Ka'aba would be given quarter.
- Any who takes refuge in the house of Abu Sufiyan (Chief of Makkah) would be given quarter.
- Any who shuts down the doors of his house and stays therein would be given quarter.
- Any who surrenders would be given quarter.
- Any who flees would not be chased.
- Prisoners and the injured would not be killed.

Thus Prophet Muhammad entered Makkah with his army and conquered it without any bloodshed. While entering Makkah, the Prophet did not enter it with pomp and show of arrogance as the worldly army commanders and kings usually enter conquered cities; rather he entered it with his head bowed down thanking Allah profoundly for helping him conquer the

sacred city from where he was once forced out in utter helplessness. No massacre was carried out and all those heads of tribes and people who had left no stone unturned in persecuting, torturing and oppressing Prophet Muhammad and his followers were present before him. Had he ordered their killing or imprisonment it would not have been unjustified. The Prophet of Allah asked them: "O people of Quraish, do you know in what manner I am going to treat you?" The people of Makkah pleaded: "We expect only good from you, because you are our venerable brother and son of a venerable brother." On hearing this, the Prophet uttered the historical pronouncement: "There is no blame on you today; go, you are all free." It is hard to find such an example in the human history.

Death

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) died on 12 Rabiul Awwal 11 AH (634 AD) at the age of 63. He did not leave any property or wealth as inheritance. Before his death, his armour was in pledge for 7.5 kilogram of jowar. At the time of his death he uttered: "Prayer, prayer, slaves and slave-girls." We notice many religious leaders possessing and owning properties worth million. But Prophet Muhammad left behind nothing of any value.

HINDU PERCEPTION OF REBIRTH AND ISLAMIC PERCEPTION OF HEREAFTER

One of the core beliefs of Hinduism is the belief of re-birth. A scientific analysis of this belief is presented below.

Death is such a fact that nobody denies it. However, some questions arise about death. Whether there is life after death or not; if there is life after death what would be its nature; whether it would be eternal; what we should do here to succeed in such a life; if there is no life after death, whether the life in this world is man's final destination and that death just end it.

We do not have any source of knowing what will happen after death either through observation or experience. Man observes people dying and also observes that after death no one has ever returned; he himself dies suddenly some day. But he cannot obtain information as to where people go after death and if they go to some place how long they will stay there. These are not just philosophical questions or an issue of academic and scientific interest; rather it pertains to the lasting success or failure of man. This cannot be ignored or taken lightly. Suppose, if there is no life after death, then man does not have to worry about it nor do anything about it. For him success or failure in this world alone matters and he will lead his life keeping this point in view. But if there is life after death, then to succeed in that world he has to lead a life in this world based on true beliefs, principles and

way of life. Those who do not believe in life after death can just claim that they do not know what will happen after death but cannot say with certainty that there is no life at all after death.

There are many perceptions in our country about life after death. One perception is that there is no life after death and hence success or failure is confined to this world alone. There is nothing like accountability after death and punishment or rewards based on the deeds carried out in this world. Therefore, man should, as far as possible, lead a comfortable and luxurious life in this world and try to fulfill all his desires. There are not many who believe in this perception.

The second perception is that man takes a new birth after death in a good or bad body based on his deeds in this world, that the soul does not die, that man has to taste the result of his deeds, and that the cycle of birth, death and then rebirth continues unabated. Man takes 84 lakh forms and in the end takes birth as a good person and is rescued from this cycle and obtains salvation in that his soul joins the Supreme Soul. According to this perception, based on his deeds, man continuously takes birth after death in the shape of either a human being, or an animal, or a tree or even as an insect. This is the perception of a majority of people of this country.

The third perception is that the first man, Hazrat Adam (peace be upon him) had committed a sin in paradise and the stigma of that sin is found in every child born in this world. Moreover, man commits more sins in this life too. Certainly there is life after death and the only way open for salvation and success in that life is to believe in Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) as

the son of God and that he died on the cross to expiate the sins of man. This is the only way of obtaining salvation. This is the Christian perception of life after death.

Islam presents yet another perception. It said that the life in this world is temporary and a trial, and there will be another abiding life after death. The life on earth is a trial for man and that the world is like a farm; whatever he sows here by way of beliefs and deeds he will reap in the Hereafter in the shape of paradise or hell. Everyone would be responsible for his own deeds; no other person would be held responsible for the misdeeds of another person; everyone would have to bear his own burden. Death is not the end of life, but is the medium through which man passes from this world to the Hereafter. The Hereafter is required to fulfill the demands of justice and fair play which do not always get fulfilled in this world; many criminals, oppressors, tyrants and mischief-mongers go scot-free or cannot be punished fully.

The Hereafter is also required because Allah has created everything in the universe in pairs such as sunlight and shade, day and night, light and darkness, etc. and the objective of a pair is fulfilled only if one unit of the pair joins with the other unit. Similarly, the Hereafter is the pair of this world and without the Hereafter this world is without any objective and would become chaotic and tumultuous. There is another angle to it. Allah has bestowed man with innumerable gifts, authority and limited freedom and therefore there should be a day when he is questioned whether he utilized them according to the instructions

of Allah or had rebelled against Allah by utilizing them against His Will and instructions.

According to Islam, one day, which nobody knows except Allah, this world and the entire universe will be destroyed and in its place a new set up will be brought into being. On that Day, all dead men would be brought to life and they would be asked to account for their deeds. Those who had faith in Allah and His Prophets, particularly the last Prophet, and worked righteous deed would become entitled for paradise and those who had rebelled would be sent to Hell. The latest scientific research also upholds this concept, as the astronomers say that this entire universe is slowly and gradually progressing towards destruction.

The modern science also says that the words uttered by man and all his actions are preserved in the environment and that they can be recorded. Islām also says that all the words and actions of man are being recorded by the two angels appointed by Allah for the purpose:

"Nay, but you do reject Right and Judgement. But verily over you (are appointed angels) to protect you – kind and honourable – writing down (your deeds); they know (and understand) all that you do."

(The Quran, 82:9-12)

Moreover, all the Prophets, who have been the highly truthful, honest and virtuous people, have informed us about the coming of the Day of Judgement and the existence of the Hereafter.

Hinduism is based on four Vedas and they do not say anything about the conception of rebirth. Rather, they give a very clear perception of life after death, paradise and hell and that punishment for different sins

will be given in variously named hells. In Vedas, Upanishads, Mahabharata, Gita, etc. there is description of Patraloka which is synonymous with the Islamic terminology of the *World of Barzakh*, i.e. the period between the time of death and the time of the Day of Judgement. Gita describes both the perception of the life after death and the perception of rebirth, and one is at a loss which perception to believe and which perception to reject.

With regard to the perception of rebirth, the following questions arise which are difficult to answer:

1. Who was the first to be created in the universe? If it is man, then because of whose sins or deeds he was created? If it is contended that before the creation of man, animals, trees and other vegetation had been created, then because of whose deeds they had been created?
2. According to the Vedas, before the creation of man those creatures were created who are considered result of human sins, i.e. animals, trees, vegetation, etc. were created before the creation of man. The Vedas also tell us about the good deeds on account of which man gets good births and the bad deeds because of which he gets bad births. The question is whether these creatures were sentenced for various punishments before the promulgation of laws of retribution in Vedas.
3. The perception of rebirth necessitates existence and occurrence of sin, because without it food grains, vegetables, flowers, fruits, etc. cannot come into existence because as per the Hindu perception they are the rebirths of sinful human

beings. Moreover, man should not eat or use vegetables, fruits, flowers, etc. because they could actually contain the souls of human beings. Another fallout of the perception of rebirth is that no destitute should be helped as he must be suffering the consequences of sins committed by him in his previous birth and should not alleviate his sufferings and be allowed to complete his punishment.

4. Man has been bestowed with the power of speech, intellect and has been given the faculty to differentiate between good and bad, and has been given limited freedom to choose between good and bad, whereas all other creatures are not bestowed with these faculties; they are all bounded by the law of nature and do not have the faculty to choose between good and bad. Suppose a person has taken birth as an animal because of his sins, he cannot expiate his sins as an animal because as an animal he does not possess the faculties of choosing between good and bad and does not have the freedom to do good deeds and desist from bad ones so that he could again born as a human being or attain salvation. Hence, the perception of rebirth is utterly illogical and cannot sustain the rigours of scientific inquiry.
5. In the perception of the cycle of birth-death-rebirth, God has no role to play in the birth or death of man and it denies God with the authority of forgiving sins committed by man and perceives that God does not possess the

attribute of expiating sins and that he is helpless before the perception of .

Under the circumstances, the belief and perception of rebirth is unnatural and cannot be proved by any argument or stretch of imagination. It looks like that this belief was an interpolation in Hinduism as the Vedas are devoid of this perception and most of the renowned Hindu scholars do not accept it.

DESCRIPTION OF PARADISE AND HELL

It has been described in the foregoing pages that an abiding and lasting life awaits man after his death. There he has only two destinations: paradise or hell. Every creature has to face death. But the death of man is different from the death of other creatures such as animals, trees, vegetables, insects, etc. because their death is not only end of their life but also end of their existence, whereas man's death is the commencement of his journey towards the lasting life in the Hereafter. His life on earth is a trial and a period of action. Allah has gifted this life to man to believe in Him as the only God worthy of worship and to obey his instructions and ordinances in every walk of his life. It has been described in the Quran with solid evidence and arguments that on a fixed day the present universe and its system will be destroyed and in its place a new universe and a new system will be created. Every human being will be brought to life and gathered on the Day of Judgement to account for his faith and deeds; those who succeed on that day will be given entrance into the paradise and those who fail would be thrown into hell.

Day of Judgement

The following Verses of the Quran describe the establishment of the Day of Judgement:

"We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, but for just ends. And the Hour is surely coming (when this will be manifest)." (15:85)

"Does Man think that he will be left uncontrolled (without purpose)?" (75:36)

"He says, 'who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?' Say, 'He will give them life Who created for the first time! For He is well-versed in every kind of creation!'" (36:78-79)

"They ask you about the (final) Hour – when will be its appointed time? Say: 'The knowledge thereof is with my Lord (alone); none but He can reveal as to when it will occur. Heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth.'" (7:187)

Scenes of the Day of Judgement

Some of the scenes of the Day of Judgement as described by the Quran are as follows:

"When the sky is cleft asunder; when the stars are scattered; when the oceans are suffered to burst forth; and when the graves are turned upside down – (Then) shall each soul know what it has sent forward and (what it has) kept back." (82:1-5)

"He questions: 'When is the Day of Resurrection?' At the length, when the sight is dazed, and the moon is buried in darkness, and the sun and moon are joined together – that Day will man say: 'Where is the refuge?' By no means! No place of safety! Before your Lord (alone), that Day will be the place of rest. That Day will man be told (all) that he put forward, and all that he put back." (75:6-13)

"They see the (Day) indeed as a far-off (event); but We see it (quite) near. The Day that the sky will be like

molten brass, and the mountains will be like wool, and no friend will ask after a friend, though they will be put in sight of each other – the sinner's desire will be: Would that he could redeem himself from the Penalty of that Day by (sacrificing) his children, his wife and his brother, his kindred who sheltered him, and all, all that is on earth – so it could deliver him. By no means! For it would be the Fire of Hell, plucking out (his being) right to the skull!" (70:6-16)

"When the earth is shaken to its (utmost) convulsion, and the earth throws up its burdens (from within), and man cries (distressed): 'What is the matter with it?' – On that Day will it declare its tidings; for that your Lord will have given it inspiration. On that Day will men proceed in companies sorted out, to be shown the deeds that they (had done). Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it." (99:1-8)

"At length, when there comes the Deafening Noise – that Day shall a man flee from his own brother, and from his mother and his father, and from his wife and his children. Each one of them, that Day, will have enough concern (of his own) to make him indifferent to the others." (80:33-37)

Scenes and Nature of Paradise as described in the Holy Quran

The grandeur, comforts and lavishness of paradise have been described in the Quran as under:

"When you look (at the paradise), it is there you will see a Bliss and a Realm Magnificent. Upon them will be green Garments of fine silk and heavy brocade, and they will be adorned with Bracelets of silver; and their Lord will give to them to drink of a Wine Pure and

Holy. Verily this is a Reward for you, and your Endeavour is accepted and recognized.” (76:20-22)

“(Here is) a parable of the Paradise which the righteous are promised: In it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear. In it there are for them all kinds of fruits; and Grace from their Lord. (Can those in such Bliss) be compared to such as shall dwell forever in the Fire, and be given, to drink, boiling water, so that it cuts up their bowels (to pieces)?”

”(47:15)

“My devotees! No fear shall be on you that Day, nor shall you grieve – (being) those who have believed in Our Signs and bowed (their wills to Ours) in Islam. Enter you the Paradise, you and your wives, (in beauty and) rejoicing. To them will be passed round, dishes and goblets of gold; there will be there all that the souls could desire, all that the eyes could delight in; and you shall abide therein (for aye). Such will be the Paradise of which you are made heirs for your (good) deeds (in life). You shall have therein abundance of fruit, from which you shall have satisfaction.” (43:68-73)

“And those who believe and whose families follow them in Faith – to them shall We join their families; nor shall We deprive them (of the fruit) of aught of their works.” (52:21)

Scenes and Nature of Paradise as described in the Sayings of the Prophet

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has further elaborated and described the nature, grandeur and lavishness of Paradise as follows:

The Prophet of Allah said: "A proclaimer addressing the residents of Paradise will proclaim: You shall always remain here healthy, shall never fall ill, shall live forever and shall not face death; you shall always remain young and shall never grow old; you shall always be in comfort and shall never encounter any hardship or sorrows." (Muslim)

The Prophet of Allah said: "A small place measuring just a whip in Paradise is better than the world and everything in it." (Abu Huraira: Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet of Allah said that the best gift that Allah would bestow on the residents of paradise would be His Countenance:

The Prophet of Allah said: "When those eligible for Paradise reach their respective destinations, Almighty Allah will ask them: 'Do you require anything else?' They will reply: '(O our Lord), have You not illumined our faces, have You not admitted us into the Paradise, and have You not rescued us from the Fire (what else we require)?' Then suddenly the veil will be lifted and the residents of Paradise shall see their Lord, and for them nothing shall be more dear (and precious) than seeing their Lord." (Muslim)

Scenes and Nature of Hell as described in the Holy Quran

The Holy Quran describes the nature and horrors of Hell as under:

"Verily he who comes to his Lord as a sinner (at Judgement) – for him is Hell; therein shall he neither die nor live." (20:74)

"These two antagonists dispute with each other about their Lord: But those who deny (their Lord) – for them will be cut out a garment of Fire; over their heads will

be poured out boiling water. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies, as well as (their) skins. In addition there will be maces of iron (to punish) them. Every time they wish to get away therefrom, from anguish, they will be forced back therein, and (it will be said), 'Taste you the Penalty of Burning!'"(22:19-22)

"Some of them believed, and some of them averted their faces from him; and enough is Hell for a burning fire. Those who reject Our Signs, We shall soon cast them into the Fire; as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the Penalty; for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise." (4:55-56)

"Of no profit to me has been my wealth! My power has perished from me! (The stern command will say): Seize him, and burn him in the blazing Fire. Further, make him march in a chain, whereof the length is seventy cubits! This was he that would not believe in Allah Most High, and would not encourage the feeding of the indigent! So no friend has he here this Day. Nor has he any food except the corruption from the washing of wounds, which none do eat but those in sin."(69:28-37)

Scenes and Nature of Hell as described in the Sayings of the Prophet

The Prophet of Allah said: "Among the people of Hell, the person who gets the lightest of punishments would be that whose sandals and their laces would be of fire, because of which his brain would boil as a vessel boils on a stove, and he would presume that none other suffers more than him, though he would be getting the lightest of punishment of all the people of Hell."

(Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet of Allah said: "Zaqqoom (a highly poisonous tree which grows in Hell) would be the food of the people of Hell. If just a drop of it were to drop on the earth, it would spoil every life-supporting thing on the face of the earth. Hence, how would a person fare whose food is just Zaqqoom." (Tirmizi)

DOCTRINAL FORMULA (FUNDAMENTAL CREED OF ISLAM)

Islam is not based on birth, colour, race, family, language or region; man has no control over all these things. No human being has the power to take birth in a particular family, race, and region and cannot choose his colour or language.

Islam is a natural and universal religion. Any person belonging to any region, race, family and having any colour or speaking any language can enter the sphere of Islam, on the condition that he believes in the truth of Islam and in the teachings of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and his only intention is to obtain the good pleasure of Allah. If any person were to embrace Islam for the purpose of matrimony, or for obtaining monetary benefits or for taking revenge, his Islam would not be acceptable in the sight of Allah.

It has been very clearly mentioned in the Quran that no person should be forced and compelled to accept Islam. The only requirement is that one should believe that Islam is the true Religion; that it being the only Truth has been manifested on him with sound arguments; that by accepting it he will lead a successful and prosperous life in this world and will be saved from the Fire of the Hell in the Hereafter; and that denying the truth after it has been manifested will entail in failure in this world and danger of facing the Fire of the Hell in the Hereafter.

To enter the sphere of Islam, the doctrinal formula should not only be uttered by the tongue, but also should be firmly embedded in the heart too. It would be better to have one or two witnesses on the occasion; but it is not obligatory. This doctrinal formula is actually a sort of agreement or covenant which a servant makes with his Creator and Lord. This covenant should be carried out throughout the life and every effort should be made to fulfill all its practical demands and obligations. The doctrinal formula is as follows:

"I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His Prophet."

One singularity of this Creed or Formula is that its first part rejects polytheism and stresses on monotheism or Oneness of God, i.e. Allah alone is worthy of worship and obedience, He alone listens and responds to our invocations and prayers, He alone is the Creator of the universe and everything in it, He alone is the Lord, the Sustainer and the Cherisher of the universe, and He alone has the right to legislate Law for human beings and guide them on to the straight path; one should have firm faith in all these and other attributes of Allah mentioned in the Quran and by Allah's Prophet. The other part of the Creed mentions that Hazrat Muhammad is Allah's Prophet, which means that one should have faith in him and believe him to be the last and final Prophet of Allah; love him more than anything else in the world; believe that on him was revealed the last Book of Guidance, the Holy Quran; his life is a model based on the Quran and should be followed; and that he should be obeyed

without any reservations, as his obedience indeed is the obedience of Allah.

As stated earlier, there is no compulsion in Islam. The Holy Quran declares:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error; whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks. And Allah hears and knows all things." (2:256)

Allah has given freedom of choice to man to accept or reject the Truth i.e. the Religion of Islam. Allah has also manifested the Truth and has set it apart from the Untruth so that man could choose or reject the Truth in full light and understanding. As Islam does not allow use of force to accept the Truth, so also it does not approve the use of compulsion and force to stop anyone in accepting the Truth.

Accepting the Truth is not just changing one's religious identity; rather it is fulfilling the most important demand of one's nature. It is a fact that in man's nature the urge to have Faith in only One True God and serve and worship Him alone is deeply embedded. If a person's nature has not been deformed or he has not been misinformed about the Truth, he will accept it as soon as the Truth is manifested to him. To construe this as conversion from one religion to the other religion is a misconception; it is actually fulfilling the demands of human nature. Because of misplaced propaganda, this terminology of conversion has got a bad name.

If we look at the issue from another angle, we find that every human being in his involuntary aspects of life is a Muslim, i.e. he is obeying the laws of Allah.

For example, he is using his eyes, ears, tongue, hands, legs, and other parts of the body for which they have been created by Allah; he cannot make use of them for any other purpose. In this respect he is helpless. However, in the voluntary aspect of his life he has been given the freedom to choose or reject the Truth, and in such a situation he himself has to face the consequences. The Holy Quran avers:

"And (have We not) shown him the two highways?"
(90:10)

"Say: The Truth is from your Lord. Let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject (it)." (18:29)

It should be very clear from the foregoing discussion that Islam teaches mankind the beliefs and way of life which are based on human nature. Innumerable signs are found in the universe and in man's self itself in support of these beliefs. Any belief that man adopts in opposition to the Truth will be unintelligent and unnatural, and it is as if he is battling against his own nature. Man cannot produce any evidence from his own self or from the universe in support of his invented false beliefs.

Who Accept the Truth?

- Those who yearn for Truth and use their intellect, and are desirous of seeking their Creator's good pleasure and saving themselves from his disapprobation.
- Those who are worried about their end.
- Those who are not biased and arrogant.
- Those who wish to lead a pious life.

- Those who possess a good nature and wish to fulfill the demands of their nature and conscience in the light of the Truth.
- Those who had the courage to face all the difficulties that would come in their way because of accepting the Truth and are ready to offer sacrifices in this regard.

Reasons for Rejection of the Truth

- Obstinacy.
- Blind imitation of ancestors.
- Materialism.
- Indulgence in worldly pleasures and sensual desires.
- Sense of racial superiority, prejudices and narrow-mindedness.
- Arrogance.

There could be many more such reasons. The seekers of Truth should try to protect themselves from such negative emotions.

AFTER EMBRACING THE TRUTH

When a person embraces Islam, he proclaims faith in One God and rejects all other false gods and tries to fulfil all the demands that are made on him by such a proclamation. He also accepts Hazrat Muhammad as the last and final Prophet of Allah and accepts him to be his guide and leader and makes the determination that he would follow his teachings in every aspect of his life. He would always lead his life with piety and righteousness and never indulges in polytheism and other rituals which are contrary to the teachings of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He would always keep in mind the Day of Judgement when he would have to give an account of his actions and deeds in this world.

As soon as a person accepts Islam his cycle of action starts with the offer of congregational prayer. Within a short period of his proclaiming the Doctrinal Formula, a new entrant to Islam hears the call for prayers and he has to prove his sincerity of faith by offering the prayer in congregation. To perform the prayer properly, he has to learn how to make *wudhu* and take obligatory bath and know the dos and don'ts of hygiene and the procedure of properly offering prayer. He also has to memorize small chapters of the Holy Quran, preferably with meaning, to recite them during the prayers. Later on, he has to learn the other necessary rules and regulations pertaining to other obligatory prayers like fasting in the month of

Ramazan, if rich and capable performing Hajj and paying Zakat. He should also learn the Islamic teachings concerning rights of parents, wife, children, brothers, sisters, his kin, his neighbours and other human beings and try to discharge those rights as far as possible. It is to be clearly understood that after embracing Islam, the relationship of a neo-Muslim with his parents and other kin does not get severed even if they remain non-Muslims; he has to fulfill their rights and look after them well. However, if his parents and other relatives try to force him to reject Islam and return back to polytheism or his previous religion, he should not obey them.

Another Important Responsibility

The Holy Quran which is the source of Islamic teachings is in Arabic language. Hence, one should try to learn Arabic and try to understand its meaning. Till such time that he could master the Arabic language, he should try to understand the Quran with the help of translations and explanatory notes that are available in major languages of India and the world. Reciting the Quran in Arabic language carries high rewards; reading just one letter entails in 10 rewards. In addition to the Quran, one should read the Sayings of the Prophet also which are nothing but explanation of the Quran. Islam is not just a ritualistic religion; it requires its adherents to acquire knowledge of the Quran and the Sayings of Prophet and act upon them in their day-to-day activities.

Another responsibility of a new entrant to Islam is to introduce the teachings of Islam to his parents, wife, children and other relatives and try to remove their

misunderstandings against Islam so that they could also embrace Islam. Because of the false and negative propaganda against Islam and Muslims in the media and other sources, their image has been distorted. Also, most of the time the new entrant to Islam has to face severe opposition from his parents and other relatives. But he should not get discouraged from these things. On the contrary, he should patiently try to win them over with his good behaviour and righteous conduct. Along with this he should also sincerely pray Allah for their guidance.

A FINAL WORD

Just suppose for a moment that there is not to be a Day of Judgement and there is nothing like Hereafter and there will never be any accountability of our actions performed in this world and that paradise and hell do not exist, and that the life here in this world is the only reality. In that situation, the end of those who believe in One God, or who believe in numerous gods, or who are atheists and do not believe in any god would be the same, that is, the question of success or failure after the death does not arise at all.

However, if the situation turned out to be contrary to the aforesaid assumption and if there is to be life after death, and there is to be a Day of Judgement when every human soul would be gathered and asked to account for his actions in the world, and based on that accountability they are sent either to enjoy the comforts of paradise or sent to the fire of hell to suffer its torments and tortures, how disappointed would be those who have worked and led a life on the aforesaid false supposition, because the comforts and torments of the Hereafter would not be for a short period, but for eons. The Quran very clearly describes that the rejecters of Faith and the Truth and the polytheists would wish and plead to be sent back again to the world so that they could have Faith and do righteous deeds, but their plea would be rejected.

"And they say: 'What! When we lie, hidden and lost, in the earth, shall we indeed be in a Creation renewed?' Nay, they deny the Meeting with their

Lord! Say: "The Angel of Death put in charge of you, will (duly) take your souls. Then shall you be brought back to your Lord." If only you could see when the guilty ones will bend low their heads before their Lord, (saying:) "Our Lord! We have seen and we have heard; now then send us back (to the world). We will work righteousness, for we do indeed (now) believe. ... (They will be told:) "Taste you then – for you forgot the Meeting of this Day of yours, and We too will forget you – taste you the penalty of Eternity for your (evil) deeds!" (32:10-12, 14)

The purport of the aforesaid Verses is that the rejecters of Truth will be told in the Hereafter that, as others, they had also been allowed a definite term of life in the world; they had also been bestowed with the faculties of intelligence, intellect and conscience; many signs concerning the existence of their Creator and the coming of a Day of Judgement had been made evident in their self and all over the universe; for their guidance a Holy Book along with the Prophet of Allah had been sent and the Book and the life of the Prophet had been preserved for them, but they never took advantage of them and did not follow neither the Prophet nor the Quran and worked righteous deeds in the world. Hence, they themselves were responsible for their evil deeds and actions and became liable to undergo torments of hell.

We get only one life in this world and death would end it suddenly. Therefore, it is important that we utilize this life gainfully and save from disappointment and failure in the Hereafter by leading a pious and righteous life according to the Guidance provided by Islam.

O man! Know thyself!

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